# The Ancient Law

Ellen Glasgow

R.O. ROSE

Edmund Pendleton Coles-

With his Mother's love

& wishing him many

happy returns of this day-

April First

1908-

# THE ANCIENT LAW

BY THE

SAME AUTHOR

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

THE DELIVERANCE

THE BATTLE-GROUND

THE FREEMAN, AND OTHER POEMS

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

PHASES OF AN INFERIOR PLANET

THE DESCENDANT

# The Ancient Law

By

ELLEN GLASGOW

New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1908

COPYRIGHT, 1908, BY
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
PUBLISHED, JANUARY, 1908

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
INCLUDING THAT OF TRANSLATION INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES
INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN

TO

MY GOOD FRIEND EFFENDI

# CONTENTS

## Book First—The New Life


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | The Road | 3 |
| II. | The Night | 15 |
| III. | The Return to Tappahannock | 31 |
| IV. | The Dream of Daniel Smith | 42 |
| V. | At Tappahannock | 54 |
| VI. | The Pretty Daughter of the Mayor | 62 |
| VII. | Shows the Graces of Adversity | 72 |
| VIII. | "Ten Commandment Smith" | 90 |
| IX. | The Old and the New | 101 |
| X. | His Neighbour's Garden | 111 |
| XI. | Bullfinch's Hollow | 123 |
| XII. | A String of Coral | 135 |


## Book Second—The Day of Reckoning


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | In Which a Stranger Appears | 147 |
| II. | Ordway Compromises With the Past | 162 |
| III. | A Change of Lodging | 174 |
| IV. | Shows That a Laugh Does not Heal a Heartache | 185 |
| V. | Treats of a Great Passion in a Simple Soul | 196 |
| VI. | In Which Baxter Plots | 209 |

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| VII. | Shows That Politeness, Like Charity, Is an Elastic Mantle | 222 |
| VIII. | The Turn of the Wheel | 234 |
| IX. | At the Cross-roads | 248 |
| X. | Between Man and Man | 256 |
| XI. | Between Man and Woman | 268 |

BOOK THIRD—THE LARGER PRISON

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | The Return to Life | 281 |
| II. | His Own Place | 290 |
| III. | The Outward Pattern | 303 |
| IV. | The Letter and the Spirit | 317 |
| V. | The Will of Alice | 329 |
| VI. | The Iron Bars | 341 |
| VII. | The Vision and the Fact | 353 |
| VIII. | The Weakness in Strength | 363 |

BOOK FOURTH—LIBERATION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | The Inward Light | 379 |
| II. | At Tappahannock Again | 392 |
| III. | Alice's Marriage | 409 |
| IV. | The Power of the Blood | 420 |
| V. | The House of Dreams | 434 |
| VI. | The Ultimate Choice | 443 |
| VII. | Flight | 454 |
| VIII. | The End of the Road | 469 |
| IX. | The Light Beyond | 482 |

# BOOK FIRST

# THE NEW LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### The Road

THOUGH it was six days since Daniel Ordway had come out of prison, he was aware, when he reached the brow of the hill, and stopped to look back over the sunny Virginia road, that he drank in the wind as if it were his first breath of freedom. At his feet the road dropped between two low hills beyond which swept a high, rolling sea of broomsedge; and farther still—where the distance melted gradually into the blue sky—he could see not less plainly the New York streets through which he had gone from his trial and the walls of the prison where he had served five years. Between this memory and the deserted look of the red clay road there was the abrupt division which separates actual experience from the objects in a dream. He felt that he was awake, yet it seemed that the country through which he walked must vanish presently at a touch. Even the rough March wind blowing among the broomsedge heightened rather than diminished the effect of the visionary meeting of earth and sky.

As he stood there in his ill-fitting clothes, with his head bared in the sun and the red clay ground to fine dust on his coarse boots, it would have been difficult

at a casual glance to have grouped him appropriately in any division of class. He might have been either a gentleman who had turned tramp or a tramp who had been born to look a gentleman. Though he was barely above medium height, his figure produced even in repose an impression of great muscular strength, and this impression was repeated in his large, regular, and singularly expressive features. His face was square with a powerful and rather prominent mouth and chin; the brows were heavily marked and the eyes were of so bright a blue that they lent an effect which was almost one of gaiety to his smile. In his dark and slightly coarsened face the colour of his eyes was intensified until they appeared to flash at times like blue lights under his thick black brows. His age was, perhaps, forty years, though at fifty there would probably be but little change recorded in his appearance. At thirty one might have found, doubtless, the same lines of suffering upon his forehead and about his mouth.

As he went on over some rotting planks which spanned a stream that had gone dry, the road he followed was visible as a faded scar in a stretch of impoverished, neutral-toned country—the least distinctive and most isolated part of what is known in Virginia as "the Southside." A bleached monotony was the one noticeable characteristic of the landscape —the pale clay road, the dried broomsedge, and even the brownish, circular-shaped cloud of smoke, which hung over the little town in the distance, each contributing a depressing feature to a face which

presented at best an unrelieved flatness of colour. The single high note in the dull perspective was struck by a clump of sassafras, which, mistaking the mild weather for a genial April, had flowered tremulously in gorgeous yellow.

The sound of a wagon jolting over the rough road, reached him presently from the top of the hill, and as he glanced back, he heard a drawling curse thrown to the panting horses. A moment later he was overtaken by an open spring wagon filled with dried tobacco plants of the last season's crop. In the centre of the load, which gave out a stale, pungent odour, sat a small middle-aged countryman, who swore mild oaths in a pleasant, jesting tone. From time to time, as the stalks beneath him were jostled out of place, he would shift his seat and spread out his short legs clad in overalls of blue jean. Behind him in the road the wind tossed scattered and damaged leaves of tobacco.

When the wagon reached Ordway, he glanced over his shoulder at the driver, while he turned into the small grass-grown path amid the clumps of sassafras.

"Is that Bernardsville over there?" he asked, pointing in the direction of the cloud of smoke.

The wagon drew up quickly and the driver—who showed at nearer view to be a dirty, red-bearded farmer of the poorer class—stared at him with an expression which settled into suspicion before it had time to denote surprise.

"Bernardsville! Why, you 've come a good forty miles out of your road. That thar 's Tappahannock."

"Tappahannock? I had n't heard of it."

"Mebbe you ain't, but it never knowed it."

"Anything going on there? Work, I mean?"

"The biggest shippin' of tobaccy this side o' Danville is goin' on thar. Ever heard o' Danville?"

"I know the name, but the tobacco market is about closed now, is n't it? The season 's over."

The man's laugh startled the waiting horses, and lifting their heads from a budding bush by the roadside, they moved patiently toward Tappahannock.

"Closed? Bless you, it never closes—Whoa! thar, won't you, darn you? To be sure sales ain't so brisk to-day as they war a month back, but I 'm jest carryin' in my leetle crop to Baxter's warehouse."

"It is n't manufactured, then—only bought and sold?"

"Oh, it 's sold quick enough and bought, too. Baxter auctions the leaf off in lots and it 's shipped to the factories in Richmond an' in Danville. You ain't a native of these parts, I reckon?"

"A native—no? I 'm looking for work."

"What sort of work? Thar 's work an' work. I saw a man once settin' out in an old field doin' a picture of a pine tree, an' he called it work. Wall, wall, if you 're goin' all the way to Tappahannock, I reckon I kin give you a lift along. Mebbe you kin pick up an odd job in Baxter's warehouse—thar 's a sayin' that he feeds all the crows in Tappahannock."

He drove on with a chuckle, for Ordway had declined the proffered "lift," and the little cloud of

dust raised by the wagon drifted slowly in the direction of the town.

A mile farther on Ordway found that as the road approached Tappahannock, the country lost gradually its aspect of loneliness, and the colourless fields were dotted here and there with small Negro cabins, built for the most part of unbarked pine logs laid roughly cross-wise to form square enclosures. Before one of these primitive dwellings a large black woman, with a strip of checked blue and white gingham bound about her head, was emptying a pail of buttermilk into a wooden trough. When she saw Ordway she nodded to him from the end of the little path, bordered by rocks, which led from the roadside to the single stone step before her cabin door.

As he watched the buttermilk splash into the trough, Ordway remembered, with a spasm of faintness, that he had eaten nothing since the day before, and turning out of the road, he asked the woman for a share of the supper that she gave the pigs.

"Go 'way, honey, dis yer ain' fit'n fur you," she replied, resting the pail under her arm against her rolling hip, "I'se des' thowin' hit ter de hawgs."

But when he had repeated his request, she motioned to a wooden bench beside a scrubby lilac bush on which a coloured shirt hung drying, and going into the single room inside, brought him a glass of buttermilk and a piece of corn bread on a tin plate. While he ate hungrily of the coarse food a half-naked Negro baby, covered with wood ashes, rolled

across the threshold and lay sprawling in the path at his feet.

After a little rambling talk the woman went back into the cabin, where she whipped up cornmeal dough in an earthenware bowl, turning at intervals to toss a scrap or two to a red and white cock that hovered, expectant, about the doorway. In the road a covered wagon crawled by, and the shadow it threw stretched along the path to the lilac bush where the coloured shirt hung drying. The pigs drank the buttermilk from the trough with loud grunts; the red and white cock ventured, alert and wary, across the threshold; and the Negro baby, after sprawling on its stomach in the warm earth, rolled over and lay staring in silence at the blue sky overhead.

There was little beauty in the scene except the beauty which belongs to all things under the open sky. Road and landscape and cabin were bare even of any chance effect of light and shadow. Yet there was life—the raw, primal life of nature—and after his forty years of wasted experience, Ordway was filled with a passionate desire for life. In his careless pursuit of happiness he had often found weariness instead, but sitting now homeless and penniless, before the negro's cabin, he discovered that each object at which he looked—the long road that led somewhere, the smoke hanging above the distant town, the deep-bosomed negro mother and the half-naked negro baby—that each of these possessed an interest to which he awakened almost with a start of wonder. And yielding to the influence of his

thought, his features appeared to lose gradually their surface coarseness of line. It was as if his mouth grew vague, enveloped in shadow, while the eyes dominated the entire face and softened its expression to one of sweetness, gaiety and youth. The child that is in every man big enough to contain it looked out suddenly from his altered face.

He was thinking now of a day in his boyhood—of an early autumn morning when the frost was white on the grass and the chestnuts dropped heavily from the spreading boughs and the cider smelt strong and sweet as it oozed from the crushed winesaps. On that morning, after dressing by candlelight, he had gone into town with his maiden aunt, a lady whom he remembered chiefly by her false gray curls which she wore as if they had been a halo. At the wayside station, while they had waited for the train to the little city of Botetourt, he had seen a convict brought in, handcuffed, on his way to the penitentiary, and in response to the boy's persistent questioning, his aunt had told him that the man was wicked, though he appeared to the child's eyes to be only miserable—a thin, dirty, poorly clad labourer with a red cotton handkerchief bound tightly about his jaw. A severe toothache had evidently attacked him, for while he had stared sullenly at the bare planks of the floor, he had made from time to time a suffering, irritable movement with his head. At each gesture the guard had called out sharply: "Keep still there, won't you?" to which the convict had responded by a savage lowering of his heavy brows.

For the first time it had occurred to the child that day that there must be a strange contradiction—a fundamental injustice in the universal scheme of nature. He had always been what his father had called impatiently "a boy with ideas," and it had seemed to him then that this last "idea" of his was far the most wonderful of them all—more wonderful than any he had found in books or in his own head at night. At the moment he had felt it swell so large in his heart that a glow of happiness had spread through his body to his trembling hands. Slipping from his aunt's hold he had crossed the room to where the convict sat sullenly beside his guard.

"I'll give you all my money," he had cried out joyously, "because I am so much happier than you."

The convict had started and looked up with an angry flash in his eyes; the guard had burst into a loud laugh while he spat tobacco juice through the window; the silver had scattered and rolled under the benches on the plank floor; and the child's aunt, rustling over in her stiff brocade, had seized his arm and dragged him, weeping loudly, into the train. So his first mission had failed, yet at this day he could remember the joy with which he had stretched out his little hand and the humiliation in which he had drawn it back. That was thirty years ago, but he wondered now if the child's way had been God's way, after all?

For there had come an hour in his life when the convict of his boyhood had stood in closer relationship

to his misery than the people whom he had touched in the street. His childish memories scattered like mist, and the three great milestones of his past showed bare and white, as his success, his temptation and his fall. He remembered the careless ambition of his early youth, the brilliant promise of his college years, and the day on which he had entered as a younger member the great banking house of Amos, Bonner, and Amos. Between this day and the slow minutes when he had stood in his wife's sitting-room awaiting his arrest, he could find in his thoughts no gradation of years to mark the terrible swiftness of his descent. In that time which he could not divide Wall Street had reached out and sucked him in; the fever of speculation had consumed like disease the hereditary instincts, the sentiments of honour, which had barred its way. One minute he had stood a rich man on the floor of the Stock Exchange—and was it an instant or a century afterwards that he had gone out into the street and had known himself to be a beggar and a criminal? Other men had made millions with the use of money which they held in trust; but the star of the gambler had deserted him at the critical hour; and where other men had won and triumphed, he had gone down, he told himself, dishonoured by a stroke of luck. In his office that day a mirror over the mantel had showed him his face as he entered, and he had stopped to look at it almost with curiosity —as if it were the face of a stranger which repelled him because it bore some sinister likeness to his own.

After this there had come days, weeks, months, when at each sudden word, at each opening of the door, he had started, half sickened, by fear of the discovery which he knew must come. His nerves had quivered and given way under the pressure; he had grown morose, irritable, silent; and in some half-insane frenzy, he had imagined that his friends, his family, his wife, even his young children, had begun to regard him with terror and suspicion. But at last the hour had come, and in the strength with which he had risen to meet it, he had won back almost his old self—for courage, not patience, was the particular virtue of his temperament. He had stood his trial bravely, had heard his sentence without a tremor, and had borne his punishment without complaint. The world and he were quits now, and he felt that it owed him at least the room for a fair fight.

The prison, he had said once, had squared him with his destiny, yet to-day each act of his past appeared to rivet, not itself, but its result upon his life. Though he told himself that he was free, he knew that, in the reality of things, he was still a prisoner. From the lowest depths that he had touched he was reached even now by the agony of his most terrible moment when, at the end of his first hopeless month, he had found awaiting him one day a letter from his wife. It was her final good-bye, she had written; on the morrow she would leave with her two children for his father's home in Virginia; and the single condition upon which the old man had consented to provide

for them was that she should separate herself entirely from her husband. "The condition is hard," she had added, "made harder, too, by the fact that you are his son and my only real claim upon him is through you—yet when you consider the failure of our life together, and that the children's education even is unprovided for, you will, I feel sure, admit that my decision has been a wise one."

The words had dissolved and vanished before his eyes, and turning away he had flung himself on his prison bed, while the hard, dry sobs had quivered like blows in his chest. Yet she was right! His judgment had acquitted her in the first agony of his reproach, and the unerring justice in her decision had convicted him with each smooth, calm sentence in her letter. As he lay there he had lost consciousness of the bare walls and the hot sunshine that fell through the grating, for the ultimate desolation had closed over him like black waters.

A little later he had gone from his cell and taken up his life again; but all that he remembered of it now was a voice that had called to him in the prison yard.

"You look so darn sunk in the mouth I 'll let you have my last smoke—damn you!"

Turning sullenly he had accepted the stranger's tobacco, unaware at the moment that he was partaking of the nature of a sacrament—for while he had smoked there in his dogged misery, he had felt revive in his heart a stir of sympathy for the convict he had seen at the wayside station in Virginia. As if

revealed by an inner illumination the impressions of that morning had started, clear as light, into his brain. The frost on the grass, the dropping chestnuts, the strong sweet smell of the crushed winesaps—these things surrounded in his memory the wretched figure of the man with the red cotton handkerchief bound tightly about his swollen jaw. But the figure had ceased now to stand for itself and for its own degradation alone—haunting, tragic, colossal, it had become in his thoughts the image of all those who suffer and are oppressed. So through his sin and his remorse, Ordway had travelled slowly toward the vision of service.

With a word of thanks to the woman, he rose from the bench and went down the little path and out into the road. The wind had changed suddenly, and as he emerged from the shelter of a thicket, it struck against his face with a biting edge. Where the sun had declined in the western sky, heavy clouds were driving close above the broken line of the horizon. The night promised to be cold, and he pushed on rapidly, urged by a feeling that the little town before him held rest and comfort and the new life beneath its smoking chimneys. Walking was less difficult now, for the road showed signs of travel as it approached the scattered houses, which appeared thrust into community by the surrounding isolation of the fields. At last, as he ascended a slight elevation, he found that the village, screened by a small grove of pines, lay immediately beneath the spot upon which he stood.

## CHAPTER II

### The Night

The scattered houses closed together in groups, the road descended gradually into a hollow, and emerging on the opposite side, became a street, and the street slouched lazily downhill to where a railroad track ran straight as a seam across the bare country. Quickening his steps, Ordway came presently to the station—a small wooden building newly painted a brilliant yellow—and pushed his way with difficulty through a crowd of Negroes that had gathered closely beside the waiting train.

"Thar 's a good three hundred of the critters going to a factory in the North," remarked a man behind him, "an' yit they don't leave more 'n a speck of white in the county. Between the crows an' the darkies I 'll be blamed if you can see the colour of the soil."

The air was heavy with hot, close smells—a mingling of smoke, tobacco, dust and humanity. A wailing sound issued from the windows of the cars where the dark faces were packed tightly together, and a tall Negro, black as ebony, in a red shirt open at the throat, began strumming excitedly upon a banjo. Near him a mulatto woman lifted a shrill soprano voice, while she stood beating the

air distractedly with her open palms. On the other side of the station a dog howled, and the engine uttered an angry whistle as if impatient of the delay.

After five years of prison discipline, the ugly little town appeared to Ordway to contain an alluring promise of freedom. At the instant the animation in the scene spoke to his blood as if it had been beauty, and movement seemed to him to possess some peculiar æsthetic quality apart from form or colour. The brightly dyed calicos on the Negro women; the shining black faces of the men, smooth as ebony; the tragic primitive voices, like voices imprisoned in the soil; the strumming of the rude banjo; the whistling engine and the howling dog; the odours of smoke and dust and fertilisers—all these things blended in his senses to form an intoxicating impression of life. Nothing that could move or utter sounds or lend a spot of colour appeared common or insignificant to his awakened brain. It was all life, and for five years he had been starved in every sense and instinct.

The main street—Warehouse Street, as he found later that it was called—appeared in the distance as a broad river of dust which ran from the little station to where the warehouses and small shops gave place to the larger dwellings which presided pleasantly over the neighbouring fields. As Ordway followed the board sidewalk, he began idly reading the signs over the shops he passed, until "Kelly's Saloon," and "Baker's General Store" brought him suddenly upon a dark oblong building which ran back, under

a faded brick archway. Before the entrance several men were seated in cane chairs, which they had tilted conveniently against the wall, and at Ordway's approach they edged slightly away and sat regarding him over their pipes with an expression of curiosity which differed so little in the different faces that it appeared to result from some internal automatic spring.

"I beg your pardon," he began after a moment's hesitation, "but I was told that I might find work in Baxter's warehouse."

"Well, it 's a first-rate habit not to believe everything you 're told," responded an enormous man, in half-soiled clothes, who sat smoking in the middle of the archway. "I can't find work myself in Baxter's warehouse at this season. Ain't that so, boys?" he enquired with a good-natured chuckle of his neighbours.

"Are you Mr. Baxter?" asked Ordway shortly.

"I 'm not sure about the Mister, but I 'm Baxter all right." He had shifted his pipe to the extreme corner of his mouth as he spoke, and now removing it with what seemed an effort, he sat prodding the ashes with his stubby thumb. His face, as he glanced down, was overspread by a flabbiness which appeared to belong to expression rather than to feature.

"Then there 's no chance for me?" enquired Ordway.

"You might try the cotton mills—they 's just down the next street. If there 's a job to be had in town you 'll most likely run up against it there."

"It 's no better than a wild goose chase you're sending him on, Baxter," remarked a smaller member of the group, whose head protruded unexpectedly above Baxter's enormous shoulder; "I was talking to Jasper Trend this morning and he told me he was turning away men every day. Whew! but this wind is getting too bitter for me, boys."

"Oh, there 's no harm can come of trying," insisted the cheerful giant, pushing back his chair as the others retreated out of the wind, "if hope does n't fill the stomach it keeps the heart up, and that 's something."

His great laugh rolled out, following Ordway along the street as he went in pursuit of the fugitive opportunity which disported itself now in the cotton factory at the foot of the hill. When he reached the doors the work of the day was already over, and a crowd of operatives surged through the entrance and overflowed into the two roads which led by opposite ways into the town. Drawing to one side of the swinging doors, he stood watching the throng a moment before he could summon courage to enter the building and inquire for the office of the manager. When he did so at last it was with an almost boyish feeling of hesitation.

The manager—a small, wiry man with a wart on the end of his long nose—was hurriedly piling papers into his desk before closing the factory and going home to supper. His hands moved impatiently, almost angrily, for he remembered that he had already worked overtime and that the muffins

his wife had promised him for supper would be cold. At any other hour of the day he would have received Ordway with politeness—for he was at heart a well-disposed and even a charitable person—but it happened that his dinner had been unsatisfactory (his mutton had been served half raw by a new maid of all-work) and he had particularly set his hopes upon the delicious light muffins in which his wife excelled. So when he saw Ordway standing between him and his release, his face grew black and the movements of his hands passed to jerks of frantic irritation.

"What do you want? Say it quick—I 've no time to talk," he began, as he pushed the last heap of papers inside, and let the lid of his desk fall with a bang.

"I 'm looking for work," said Ordway, "and I was told at Baxter's warehouse——"

"Darn Baxter. What kind of work do you want?"

"I 'll take anything—I can do bookkeeping or——"

"Well, I don't want a bookkeeper."

He locked his desk, and turning to take down his hat, was incensed further by discovering that it was not on the hook where he had placed it when he came in. Finding it at last on a heap of reports in the corner, he put it on his head and stared at Ordway, with his angry eyes.

"You must have come a long way—have n't you? Mostly on foot?"

"A good distance."

"Why did you select Tappahannock? Was there any reason?"

"I wanted to try the town, that was all."

"Well, I tell you what, my man," concluded the manager, while his rage boiled over in the added instants of his delay; "there have been a blamed sight too many of your kind trying Tappahannock of late—and the best thing you can do is to move on to a less particular place. When we want bookkeepers here we don't pick 'em up out of the road."

Ordway swallowed hard, and his hands clinched in a return of one of his boyish spasms of temper. His vision of the new life was for an instant defaced and clouded; then as he met the angry little eyes of the man before him, he felt that his rage went out of him as suddenly as it had come. Turning without a word, he passed through the entrance and out into the road, which led back, by groups of negro hovels, into the main street of the town.

His anger gave place to helplessness; and it seemed to him, when he reached presently the larger dwellings upon the hill, and walked slowly past the squares of light that shone through the unshuttered windows, that he was more absolutely alone than if he had stood miles away from any human habitation. The outward nearness had become in his thoughts the measure of the inner distance. He felt himself to be detached from humanity, yet he knew that in his heart there existed a stronger bond than he had ever admitted in the years of his prosperity. The generous impulses of his youth were still there, but had not sorrow winnowed them from all that was base or

merely selfish? Was the lesson that he had learned in prison to be wholly lost? Did the knowledge he had found there count for nothing in his life—the bitterness of shame, the agony of remorse, the companionship with misery? He remembered a Sunday in the prison when he had listened to a sermon from a misshapen little preacher, whose face was drawn sideways by a burn which he had suffered during an epileptic seizure in his childhood. In spite of his grotesque features the man had drawn Ordway by some invisible power which he had felt even then to be the power of faith. Crippled, distorted, poorly clad, the little preacher, he felt, had found the great possession which he was still seeking—this man believed with a belief that was larger than the external things which he had lost. When he shut his eyes now he could still see the rows of convicts in the chapel, the pale, greenish light in which each face resembled the face of a corpse, the open Bible in its black leather binding, and beside it the grotesque figure of the little preacher who had come, like his Master, to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

The sun had dropped like a ball below the gray horizon, and the raw March wind, when it struck him now, brought no longer the exhilaration of the afternoon. A man passed him, comfortable, well-fed, wheezing slightly, with his fat neck wrapped in a woollen muffler, and as he stopped before a whitewashed gate, which opened into the garden surrounding a large, freshly painted house, Ordway touched

his arm and spoke to him in a voice that had fallen almost to a whisper.

At his words, which were ordinary enough, the man turned on him a face which had paled slightly from surprise or fear. In the twilight Ordway could see his jaw drop while he fumbled awkwardly with his gloved hands at the latch of the gate.

"I don't know what you mean—I don't know" he repeated in a wheezing voice, "I 'm sorry, but I really don't know," he insisted again as if in a helpless effort to be understood. Once inside the garden, he closed the gate with a bang behind him, and went rapidly up the gravelled walk to the long piazza where the light of a lamp under a red shade streamed through the open door.

Turning away Ordway followed the street to the end of the town, where it passed without distinct change of character into the country road. On this side the colour of the soil had paled until it looked almost blanched under the rising moon. Though the twilight was already in possession of the fields a thin red line was still visible low in the west, and beneath this the scattered lights in negro cabins shone like obscure, greenish glow-worms, hidden among clumps of sassafras or in stretches of dried broomsedge. As Ordway looked at these humble dwellings, it seemed to him that they might afford a hospitality denied him by the more imposing houses of the town. He had already eaten of the Negro's charity, and it was possible that before dawn he might be compelled to eat of it again.

Beneath his feet the long road called to him as it wound a curving white line drawn through the vague darkness of the landscape. Somewhere in a distant pasture a bull bellowed, and the sound came to him like the plaintive voice of the abandoned fields. While he listened the response of his tired feet to the road appeared to him as madness, and stopping short, he turned quickly and looked back in the direction of Tappahannock. But from the spot on which he stood the lights of the town offered little promise of hospitality, so after an uncertain glance, he moved on again to a bare, open place where two roads met and crossed at the foot of a blasted pine. A few steps farther he discovered that a ruined gate stood immediately on his right, and beyond the crumbling brick pillars, he made out dimly the outlines of several fallen bodies, which proved upon nearer view to be the prostrate forms of giant cedars. An avenue had once led, he gathered, from the gate to a house situated somewhere at the end of the long curve, for the great trees lying across the road must have stood once as the guardians of an estate of no little value. Whether the cedars had succumbed at last to age or to the axe of the destroyer, it was too dark at the moment for him to ascertain; but the earth had claimed them now, magnificent even in their ruin, while under the dim tent of sky beyond, he could still discern their living companions of a hundred years. So impressive was the past splendour of this approach that the house seemed, when he reached it, almost an affront to the mansion which his imagination had

reared. Broad, low, built of brick, with two long irregular wings embedded in English ivy, and a rotting shingled roof that sloped over dormered windows, its most striking characteristic as he first perceived it under the moonlight was the sentiment which is inevitably associated with age and decay. Never imposing, the dwelling was now barely habitable, for the roof was sagging in places over the long wings, a chimney had fallen upon one of the moss-covered eaves, the stone steps of the porch were hollowed into dangerous channels, and the ground before the door was strewn with scattered chips from a neighbouring wood pile.

The air of desolation was so complete that at first Ordway supposed the place to be uninhabited, but discovering a light presently in one of the upper windows, he ascended the steps and beat with the rusted knocker on the panel of the door. For several minutes there was no answer to his knock. Then the sound of shuffling footsteps reached him from the distance, drawing gradually nearer until they stopped immediately beyond the threshold.

"I ain' gwine open dis yer do' ef'n hits oner dem ole hants," said a voice within, while a sharp point of light pierced through the keyhole.

An instant later, in response to Ordway's assurance of his bodily reality, the bolt creaked back with an effort and the door opened far enough to admit the slovenly head and shoulders of an aged negress.

"Miss Meely she 's laid up en she cyar'n see ner comp'ny, Marster," she announced with the evident

intention of retreating as soon as her message was delivered.

Her purpose, however, was defeated, for, slipping his heavy boot into the crack of the door, Ordway faced her under the lamp which she held high above her head. In the shadows beyond he could see dimly the bare old hall and the great winding staircase which led to the painted railing of the gallery above.

"Can you give me shelter for the night?" he asked, "I am a stranger in the county, and I 've walked thirty miles to-day."

"Miss Meely don' wan'ner comp'ny," replied the negress, while her head, in its faded cotton handkerchief, appeared to swing like a pendulum before his exhausted eyes.

"Who is Miss Meely?" he demanded, laying his hand upon her apron as she made a sudden terrified motion of flight.

"Miss Meely Brooke—Marse Edward's daughter. He 's daid."

"Well, go and ask her. I 'll wait here on the porch until you return."

Her eyelids flickered in the lamplight, and he saw the whites of her eyes leap suddenly into prominence. Then the door closed again, the bolt shot back into place, and the shuffling sound grew fainter as it passed over the bare floor. A cold nose touched Ordway's hand, and looking down he saw that an old foxhound had crept into the porch and was fawning with pleasure at his feet. He was conscious

of a thrill of gratitude for the first demonstrative welcome he had received at Tappahannock; and while he stood there with the hound leaping upon his chest, he felt that, in spite of "Miss Meely," hidden somewhere behind the closed door, the old house had not lost utterly the spirit of hospitality. His hand was still on the dog's head when the bolt creaked again and the negress reappeared upon the threshold.

"Miss Meely she sez she 's moughty sorry, suh, but she cyarn' hev ner strange gent'mun spendin' de night in de house She reckons you mought sleep in de barn ef'n you wanter."

As the door opened wider, her whole person, clad in a faded woollen dress, patched brightly in many colours, emerged timidly and followed him to the topmost step.

"You des go roun' ter de back en den thoo' de hole whar de gate used ter be, en dar's de barn. Nuttin' ain' gwine hu't you lessen hits dat ar ole ram 'Lejab."

"Well, he shall not find me unprepared," responded Ordway, with a kind of desperate gaiety, and while the old hound still leaped at his side, he found his way into a little path which led around the corner of the house, and through the tangled garden to the barn just beyond the fallen gateposts. Here the dog deserted him, running back to the porch, where a woman's voice called; and stumbling over a broken ploughshare or two, he finally reached the poor shelter which Miss Meely's hospitality afforded.

It was very dark inside, but after closing the door to shut out the wind, he groped his way through the

blackness to a pile of straw in one corner. The place smelt of cattle, and opposite to the spot on which he lay, he distinguished presently a soft, regular sound which he concluded to be caused by the breathing of a cow. Evidently the barn was used as a cattleshed also, though his observation of the mansion did not lead him to suppose that "Miss Meely" possessed anything approaching a herd. He remembered the old negress's warning allusion to the ram, but so far at least the darkness had revealed nothing that could prove hostile to his company. His head ached and his will seemed suddenly benumbed, so stretching himself at full length in the straw he fell, after a few troubled moments, into the deep and dreamless sleep of complete physical exhaustion.

An instant afterwards, it seemed to him, he was aroused by a light which flashed into his face from the opening door. A cold wind blew over him, and as he struggled almost blindly back into consciousness, he saw that a girl in a red cape stood holding a lantern above her head in the centre of the barn. At his first look the red cape warmed him as if it had been flame; then he became aware that a voice was speaking to him in a peculiar tone of cheerful authority. And it seemed to him that the red cape and the rich voice expressed the same dominant quality of personality.

"I thought you must be hungry," said the voice with energy, "so I 've brought your supper."

Even while he instinctively grasped the tray she

held out, he observed with quickened attention that the hands which offered him the food had toiled out of doors in good and bad weather—though small and shapely they were chapped from cold and roughened by marks of labour.

"You 'd better drink your coffee while it 's hot," said the voice again.

The practical nature of her advice put him immediately at his ease.

"It 's the first hot thing I 've had for a week," he responded.

"Then it will be all the better for you," replied the girl, while she reached up to hang the lantern from a rusted nail in the wall.

As the light fell over her, the red cape slipped a little from her shoulder and she put up her hand to catch it together on her bosom. The movement, slight as it was, gave Ordway a chance to observe that she possessed a kind of vigorous grace, which showed in the roundness of her limbs and in the rebellious freedom of her thick brown hair. The airy little curls on her temples stood out, he noticed, as if she had been walking bareheaded in the wind. At his first look it did not occur to him that she was beautiful; what impressed him most was the quality of radiant energy which revealed itself in every line of her face and figure—now sparkling in her eyes, now dimpling in her cheek, now quickening her brisk steps across the floor, and now touching her eyes and mouth like an edge of light. It may have been merely the effect of the red cape on a cold night, but as she moved

back and forth into the dark corners of the barn, she appeared to him to gather both warmth and animation out of the gloom.

As she did not speak again during her work, he found himself forced to observe the same friendly silence. The ravenous hunger of the afternoon had returned to him with the odour of the food, and he ate rapidly, sitting up on his straw bed, while she took up a bucket and a piece of wood sharpened at one end and prepared a bran mash for the cow quartered in a stall in one corner. When a little later she gathered up an armful of straw to replenish the animal's bed, Ordway pushed the tray aside and made a movement as if to assist her; but stopping an instant in her task, she waved him aside with the easy dignity of perfect capability.

"I can do it myself, thank you," she said, smiling; and then, glancing at his emptied plate, she added carelessly, "I 'll send back presently for the tray and lantern—good-night!"

Her tone had changed perceptibly on the last word, for its businesslike authority had given place to the musical Southern drawl so familiar to his ears in childhood. In that simple phrase, accompanied by the gracious bend of her whole person, she had put unconsciously generations of social courtesy—of racial breeding.

"Thank you—good-night," he answered, rising, and drawing back with his hand on the heavy latch.

Then before she could reach the door and pass through, a second lantern flashed there out of the

blackness beyond, and the terrified face of a Negro urchin was thrust into the full glare of light.

"Fo' de good Lawd, Miss Em'ly, dat ar ole ram done butt Sis Mehitable clean inter de smoke 'us."

Perfectly unruffled by the news the girl looked at Ordway, and then held out her small, strong hand for the lantern.

"Very well, I 'll come and shut him up," she responded quietly, and holding the red cape together on her bosom, she stepped over the threshold and followed the Negro urchin out into the night.

## CHAPTER III

### The Return to Tappahannock

At sunrise he came out of the barn, and washed his face and hands at the well, where he found a coarse towel on the moss-covered trough. The day was breaking clear, but in the fine golden light the house and lawn appeared even more desolate than they had done under the full moon. Before the war the place had been probably a comfortable, unpretentious country mansion. Some simple dignity still attached to its bowers of ivy and its ancient cedars, but it was easy to imagine that for thirty years no shingle had been added to its crumbling roof, and hardly a ship gathered from the littered walk before the door. At the end of the avenue six great trees had fallen a sacrifice, he saw now, to the mere lust for timber—for freshly cut and still odorous with sap, the huge trunks lay directly across the approach over which they had presided through the tragic history of the house. Judged by what it must have been in a fairly prosperous past, the scene was sad enough even to the eyes of a stranger; and as Ordway walked slowly down the dim, fragrant curve of the avenue, he found it difficult to place against so sombre a background, a figure as full of life and animation as that of the girl he had seen in the barn on the evening before.

She appeared to his imagination as the embodiment of youth amid surroundings whose only remaining beauties were those of age.

Though he had resolved yesterday not to return to Tappahannock, he found himself presently retracing, almost without an effort of will, the road which he had travelled so heavily in the night. Something between sunrise and sunset had renewed his courage and altered his determination. Was it only the wasted strength which had returned to him in his sleep? Or was it—he hesitated at the thought—the flush of shame which had burned his face when the girl's lantern had flashed over him out of the darkness? In that pitiless illumination it was as if not only his roughened surface, but his secret sin was laid bare; and he had felt again all the hideous publicity that had touched him and put him as one apart in the court-room. Though he had outgrown the sin, he knew now that he must carry the scar of it until his death; and he knew, also, that the reality of his punishment had been in the spirit and not in the law.

For a while he walked rapidly in the direction of Tappahannock; then sitting down in the sunshine upon the roadside, he ate the piece of cornbread he had saved last night from his supper. It would be several hours at least before he might hope to find the warehouses open for the day, so he sat patiently eating his bread under the bared boughs of a young peach-tree, while he watched the surface of the long white road which appeared to hold for him as much

despondency as freedom. A farmer driving a spotted cow to market spoke to him presently in a friendly voice; and rising to his feet, he overtook the man and fell into the jogging pace which was rendered necessary by the reluctance of the animal to proceed.

"I declar' the sense in them thar critters do beat all," remarked the farmer, after an ineffectual tug at the rope he held. "She won't be drove no more 'n a woman will—her head is what she wants no matter whar it leads her."

"Can you tell me," inquired Ordway, when they had started again upon the advance, "the name of the old house I passed a mile or so along the road?"

"Oh, you mean Cedar Hill, I reckon!—thar now, Betsey, that thar toad ain't a turnip!"

"Cedar Hill, is it? Well, they appear to be doing their level best to get rid of the cedars."

"Mr. Beverly did that—not Miss Em'ly. Miss Em'ly dotes on them trees jest the same as if they were made of flesh and blood."

"But the place belongs to Mr. Beverly, I presume?"

"If thar 's a shingle of it that ain't mortgaged, I reckon it does—though for that matter Miss Em'ly is overseer and manager, besides teachin' every day in the public school of Tappahannock. Mr. Beverly 's got a soft heart in his body—all the Brookes had that they say—but the Lord who made him knows that he ain't overblessed with brains. He used to speculate with most of the family money, but as luck would have it he always speculated wrong. Then he took to farmin', but he 's got such a slow gentlemanly

way about him that nothin' he puts in the ground ever has spirit enough to come up agin. His wife's just like him—she was Miss Amelia Meadows, his second cousin from the up-country, and when the children kept on comin' so thick and fast, as is the Lord's way with po' folks, people said thar warn't nothin' ahead of 'em but starvation. But Miss Em'ly she come back from teachin' somewhar down South an' undertook to run the whole place single-handed. Things are pickin' up a little now, they say—she 's got a will of her own, has Miss Em'ly, but thar ain't anybody in these parts that would n't work for her till they dropped. She sent for me last Monday to help her mend her henhouse, and though I was puttin' a new roof over my wife's head, I dropped everything I had and went. That was the day Mr. Beverly cut down the cedars."

"So Miss Emily did n't know of it?"

"She was in school, suh—you see she teaches in Tappahannock from nine till three, so Mr. Beverly chose that time to sell the avenue to young Tom Myers. He 's a sly man, is Mr. Beverly, for all his soft, slow ways, and if Young Tom had been on time he 'd have had half the avenue belted before Miss Em'ly got back from school. But he got in some mess or other at the store, and he was jest hewin' like thunder at his sixth cedar, when up come Miss Em'ly on that old white horse she rides. Good Lord! I hope I 'll never see anybody turn so white agin as she did when her eyes lighted on them fallen trees. 'Beverly,' she called out in a loud, high voice,

'have you dared to sell the cedars?' Mr. Beverly looked a little sick as if his stomach had gone aginst him of a sudden, but he stood right up on the trunk of a tree, and mumbled something about presarvin' useless timber when the children had no shoes an' stockings to thar feet. Then Miss Em'ly gave him a look that scorched like fire, and she rode straight up to Myers on her old horse and said as quiet as death: 'Put up your axe, Tom, I 'll give you back your money. How much have you paid him down?' When Young Tom looked kind of sheepish and said: 'a hundred dollars,' I saw her eyelids flicker, but she did n't hesitate an instant. 'You shall have it within an hour on my word of honour,' she answered, 'can you wait?' 'I reckon I can wait all day, Miss,' said Young Tom—and then she jumped down from her horse, and givin' me the bridle, caught up her skirt and ran indoors. In a minute she came flying out agin and before we had time to catch our breath she was ridin' for dear life back to town. 'You 'd better go on with yo' work,' said Mr. Beverly in his soft way, but Young Tom picked up his axe, and sat down on the big stump behind him. 'I reckon I can take her word better 'n yours, Mr. Beverly,' he answered,' an' 'I reckon you can, too, Young Tom,' said I——."

"But how did she raise the money?" inquired Ordway.

"That 's what nobody knows, suh, except her and one other. Some say she sold a piece of her mother's old jewelry—a locket or something she had put by—

and some believe still that she borrowed it from Robert Baxter or Jasper Trend. Whichever way it was, she came ridin' up within the hour on her old white horse with the notes twisted tight in her handkerchief. She was mighty quiet, then, but when it was over, great Lord, what a temper she was in. I declar' she would have struck Mr. Beverly with the sour gum twig she used for a whip if I had n't slipped in between 'em an' caught her arm. Then she lashed him with her tongue till he seemed to wither and shrink all over."

"And served him right, God bless her!" said Ordway.

"That 's so, suh, but Mr. Beverly ain't a bad man—he 's jest soft."

"Yet your Miss Emily still sticks to him, it seems?"

"If she did n't the farm would n't hold together a week. What she makes from teachin' is about all they have to live on in my opinion. Last summer, too, she started raisin' garden things an' poultry, an' she 'd have got quite a thrivin' business if she had had any kind of help. Then in July she tried her hand at puttin' up preserves and jellies to send to them big stores in the North."

Ordway remembered the cheerful authority in her voice, the little cold red hands that had offered him his supper; and his heart contracted as it did at the memory of his daughter Alice. Yet it was not pity alone that moved him, for mingled with the appeal to his sympathy there was something which

awoke in him the bitter agony of remorse. So the girl in the red cape could endure poverty such as this with honour! At the thought his past sin and his present disgrace appeared to him not only as crime but as cowardliness. He recalled the angry manager of the cotton mills, but there was no longer resentment in his mind either against the individual or against society. Instead it seemed to him that all smaller emotions dissolved in a tenderness which placed this girl and Alice apart with the other good and inspiring memories of his life. As he walked on in silence a little incident of ten years before returned to his thoughts, and he remembered the day he had found his child weeping beside a crippled beggar on his front steps.

When, a little later, they reached Tappahannock, the farmer turned with his reluctant cow into one of the smaller paths which led across the common on the edge of the town. As it was still too early to apply for work, Ordway sat down on a flat stone before an iron gate and watched the windows along the street for any signs of movement or life within. At length several frowsy Negro maids leaned out while the wooden shutters swung slowly back against the walls; then a milk wagon driven by a small boy clattered noisily round the corner, and in response to the shrill whistle of the driver, the doors opened hurriedly and the Negro maids rushed, with outstretched pitchers, down the gravelled walks to the iron gates. Presently an appetising odour of bacon reached Ordway's nostrils; and in the house across

the street a woman with her hair done up on pins, came to the window and began grinding coffee in a wooden mill. Not until eight o'clock did the town open its gates and settle itself to the day's work.

When the doors of the warehouses were fastened back, Ordway turned into the main street again, and walked slowly downhill until he came to the faded brick archway where the group of men had sat smoking the evening before. Now there was an air of movement in the long building which had appeared as mere dim vacancy at the hour of sunset. Men were passing in and out of the brick entrance, from which a thin coat of whitewash was peeling in splotches; covered wagons half filled with tobacco were standing, unhitched, along the walls; huge bags of fresh fertilisers were thrown carelessly in corners; and in the centre of the great floor, an old Negro, with a birch broom tied together with coloured string, was sweeping into piles the dried stems left after yesterday's sales. As he swept, a little cloud of pungent dust rose before the strokes of his broom and floated through the brick archway out into the street.

This morning there was even less attention paid to Ordway's presence than there had been at the closing hour. Planters hurried back and forth preparing lots for the opening sale; a wagon drove into the building, and the driver got down over the muddy wheel and lifted out several willow crates through which Ordway could catch a glimpse of the yellow sun-cured leaf. The old Negro swept briskly, piling the trash into heaps which would finally be ground into snuff or

used as a cheap grade of fertiliser. Lean hounds wandered to and fro, following the covered wagons and sniffing suspiciously at the loose plants arranged in separate lots in the centre of the floor.

"Is Baxter here this morning?" Ordway asked presently of a countryman who lounged on a pile of bags near the archway.

"I reckon you 'll find him in his office," replied the man, as he spat lazily out into the street; "that thar 's his door," he added, pointing to a little room on the right of the entrance—"I seed him go in an' I ain't seed him come out."

Nodding his thanks for the information, Ordway crossed the building and rapped lightly on the door. In response to a loud "come in," he turned the knob and stood next instant face to face with the genial giant of the evening before.

"Good-morning, Mr. Baxter, I 've come back again," he said.

"Good-morning!" responded Baxter, "I see you have."

In the full daylight Baxter appeared to have increased in effect if not in quantity, and as Ordway looked at him now, he felt himself to be in the presence less of a male creature than of an embodied benevolent impulse. His very flabbiness of feature added in a measure to the expansive generosity of mouth and chin; and slovenly, unwashed, half-shaven as he was, Baxter's spirit dominated not only his fellow men, but the repelling effect of his own unkempt exterior. To meet his glance was to become suddenly intimate:

to hear him speak was to feel that he had shaken you by the hand.

"I hoped you might have come to see things differently this morning," said Ordway.

Baxter looked him over with his soft yet penetrating eyes, his gaze travelling slowly from the coarse boots covered with red clay to the boyish smile on the dark, weatherbeaten face.

"You did not tell me what kind of work you were looking for," he observed at last. "Do you want to sweep out the warehouse or to keep the books?"

Ordway laughed. "I prefer to keep the books, but I *can* sweep out the warehouse," he replied.

"You can—can you?" said Baxter. His pipe, which was never out of his hand except when it was in his mouth, began to turn gray, and putting it between his teeth, he sucked hard at the stem for a minute.

"You 're an educated man, then?"

"I 've been to college—do you mean that?"

"You 're fit for a clerk's position?"

"I am sure of it."

"Where did you work last?"

Ordway's hesitation was barely perceptible.

"I 've been in business," he answered.

"On your own hook?" inquired Baxter.

"Yes, on my own hook."

"But you could n't make a living at it?"

"No; I gave it up for several reasons."

"Well, I don't know your reasons, my man," observed Baxter, drily, "but I like your face."

"Thank you," said Ordway, and he laughed again with the sparkling gaiety which leaped first to his blue eyes.

"And so you expect me to take you without knowing a darn thing about you?" demanded Baxter.

Ordway nodded gravely.

"Yes, I hope that is what you will do," he answered.

"I may ask your name, I reckon, may n't I?—if you have no particular objection."

"I don't mind telling you it 's Smith," said Ordway, with his gaze on a huge pamphlet entitled "Smith's Almanac" lying on Baxter's desk. "Daniel Smith."

"Smith," repeated Baxter. "Well, it ain't hard to remember. If I warn't a blamed fool, I 'd let you go," he added thoughtfully, "but there ain't much doubt, I reckon, about my being a blamed fool."

He rose from his chair with difficulty, and steadying his huge body, moved to the door, which he flung open with a jerk.

"If you 've made up your mind dead sure to butt in, you might as well begin with the next sale," he said.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Dream of Daniel Smith

He had been recommended for lodging to a certain Mrs. Twine, and at five o'clock, when the day's work at Baxter's was over, he started up the street in a bewildered search for her house, which he had been told was situated immediately beyond the first turn on the brow of the hill. When he reached the corner there was no one in sight except a small boy who sat, crying loudly, astride a little whitewashed wooden gate. Beyond the boy there was a narrow yard filled with partly dried garments hung on clothes lines, which stretched from a young locust tree near the sidewalk to the front porch, where a man with a red nose was reading the local newspaper. As the man with the red nose paid no attention to the loud lamentations of the child, Ordway stopped by the gate and inquired sympathetically if he could be of help.

"Oh, he ain't hurt," remarked the man, throwing a side glance over his paper, "he al'ays yells like that when his Ma's done scrubbed him."

"She 's washed me so clean that I feel naked," howled the boy.

"Well, you 'll get over that in a year's time," observed Ordway cheerfully, "so suppose you leave

off a minute now and show me the way to Mrs. Twine's."

At his request the boy stopped crying instantly, and stared up at him while the dirty tearmarks dried slowly on his cheeks.

"Thar ain't no way," he replied solemnly, " 'cause she 's my ma."

"Then jump down quickly and run indoors and tell her I 'd like to see her."

"'T ain't no use. She won't come."

"Well, go and ask her. I was told to come here to look for board and lodging."

He glanced inquiringly at the man on the porch, who, engrossed in the local paper, was apparently oblivious of the conversation at the gate.

"She won't come 'cause she 's washin' the rest of us," returned the boy, as he swung himself to the ground, "thar 're six of us an' she ain't done but two. That 's Lemmy she 's got hold of now. Can't you hear him holler?"

He planted his feet squarely on the board walk, looked back at Ordway over his shoulder, and departed reluctantly with the message for his mother. At the end of a quarter of an hour, when Ordway had entered the gate and sat down in the cold wind on the front steps, the door behind him opened with a jar, and a large, crimson, untidy woman, splashed with soapsuds, appeared like an embodied tempest upon the threshold.

"Canty says you 've come to look at the dead gentleman's room, suh," she began in a high voice,

approaching her point with a directness which lost none of its force because of the panting vehemence with which she spoke.

"Baxter told me I might find board with you," explained Ordway in her first breathless pause.

"To be sure he may have the dead gentleman's room, Mag," put in the man on the porch, folding his newspaper, with a shiver, as he rose to his feet.

"I warn't thinkin' about lettin' that room agin'," said Mrs. Twine, crushing her husband's budding interference by the completeness with which she ignored his presence. "But it 's jest as well, I reckon, for a defenceless married woman to have a stranger in the house. Though for the matter of that," she concluded in a burst of domestic confidence, "the woman that ain't a match for her own husband without outside help ain't deservin' of the pleasure an' the blessin' of one." Then as the man with the red nose slunk shamefacedly into the passage, she added in an undertone to Ordway, "and now if you 'll jest step inside, I 'll show you the spare room that I 've got to let."

She led the way indoors, scolding shrilly as she passed through the hall, and up the little staircase, where several half-dressed children were riding, with shrieks of delight, down the balustrade. "You need n't think you 've missed a scrubbing because company 's come," she remarked angrily, as she stooped to box the ears of a small girl lying flat on her stomach upon the landing. "Such is my taste for cleanness," she explained to Ordway, "that when

my hands once tech the soap it 's as much as I can do to keep 'em back from rubbin' the skin off. Thar 're times even when the taste is so ragin' in my breast that I can hardly wait for Saturday night to come around. Yet I ain't no friend to license whether it be in whiskey or in soap an' water. Temperance is my passion and that 's why, I suppose, I came to marry a drunkard."

With this tragic confession, uttered in a matter of fact manner, she produced a key from the pocket of her blue gingham apron, and ushered Ordway into a small, poorly furnished room, which overlooked the front street and the two bared locust trees in the yard.

"I kin let you have this at three dollars a week," she said, "provided you 're content to do yo' own reachin' at the table. Thar ain't any servant now except a twelve year old darkey."

"Yes, I 'll take it," returned Ordway, almost cheerfully; and when he had agreed definitely as to the amount of service he was to receive, he closed the creaking door behind her, and looked about the crudely furnished apartment with a sense of ownership such as he had not felt since the afternoon upon which he had stood in his wife's sitting-room awaiting his arrest. He thought of the Florentine gilding, the rich curtains, the long mirrors, the famous bronze Mercury and the Corot landscape with the sunlight upon it—and then of the terrible oppression in which these familiar objects had seemed closing in upon him and smothering him into

unconsciousness. The weight was lifted now, and he breathed freely while his gaze rested on the common pine bedstead, the scarred washstand, with the broken pitcher, the whitewashed walls, the cane chairs, the rusted scuttle, filled with cheap coal, and the unpainted table holding a glass lamp with a smoked chimney. From the hall below he could hear the scolding voice of Mrs. Twine, but neither the shrill sound nor the poor room produced in him the smothered anguish he felt even to-day at the memory of the Corot landscape bathed in sunlight.

An hour later, when he came upstairs again as an escape from the disorder of Mrs. Twine's supper table, he started a feeble blaze in the grate, which was half full of ashes, and after lighting the glass lamp, sat watching the shadows flicker to and fro on the whitewashed wall. His single possession, a photograph of his wife taken with her two children, rested against the brick chimney piece, and as he looked at it now it seemed to stand in no closer relationship to his life than did one of the brilliant chromos he had observed ornamenting the walls of Mrs. Twine's dining-room. His old life, indeed, appeared remote, artificial, conjured from unrealities —it was as if he had moved lightly upon the painted surface of things, until at last a false step had broken through the thin covering and he had plunged in a single instant against the concrete actuality. The shock had stunned him, yet he realised now that he could never return to his old sheltered outlook—to

his pleasant fiction—for he had come too close to experience ever to be satisfied again with falsehood.

The photograph upon the mantel was the single remaining link which held him to-day to his past life—to his forfeited identity. In the exquisite, still virgin face of his wife, draped for effect in a scarf of Italian lace—he saw embodied the one sacred memory to which as Daniel Smith he might still cling with honour. The face was perfect, the expression of motherhood which bent, flamelike, over the small boy and girl, was perfect also; and the pure soul of the woman seemed to him to have formed both face and expression after its own divine image. In the photograph, as in his memory, her beauty was touched always by some rare quality of remoteness, as if no merely human conditions could ever entirely compass so ethereal a spirit. The passion which had rocked his soul had left her serenity unshaken, and even sorrow had been powerless to leave its impress or disfigurement upon her features.

As the shadows flickered out on the walls, the room grew suddenly colder. Rising he replenished the fire, and then going over to the bed, he flung himself, still dressed, under the patchwork quilt from which the wool was protruding in places. He was thinking of the morning eighteen years ago when he had first seen her as she came, with several girl companions, out of the old church in the little town of Botetourt. It was a Christmas during his last year at Harvard, when moved by a sudden interest in his Southern associations, he had gone down for two days to his

childhood's home in Virginia. Though the place was falling gradually to ruin, his maiden great-aunt still lived there in a kind of luxurious poverty; and at the sight of her false halo of gray curls, he had remembered, almost with a start of surprise, the morning when he had seen the convict at the little wayside station. The station, the country, the muddy roads, and even the town of Botetourt were unchanged, but he himself belonged now to another and what he felt to be a larger world. Everything had appeared provincial and amusing to his eyes—until as he passed on Christmas morning by the quaint old churchyard, he had seen Lydia Preston standing in the sunshine amid the crumbling tombstones of several hundred years. Under the long black feather in her hat, her charming eyes had dwelt on him kindly for a minute, and in that minute it had seemed to him that the racial ideal slumbering in his brain had responded quickly to his startled blood. Afterward they had told him that she was only nineteen, a Southern beauty of great promise, and the daughter of old Adam Preston, who had made and lost a fortune in the last ten years. But these details seemed to him to have no relation to the face he had seen under the black feather against the ivy-covered walls of the old church. The next evening they had danced together at a ball; he had carried her fan, a trivial affair of lace and satin, away in his pocket, and ten days later he had returned, flushed with passion, to finish his course at Harvard. Love had put wings to his ambition; the following year he had stood at the head of his class, and before

the summer was over he had married her and started brilliantly in his career. There had been only success in the beginning. When had the tide turned so suddenly? he wondered, and when had he begun to drift into the great waters where men are washed down and lost?

Lying on the bed now in the firelight, he shivered and drew the quilt closer about his knees. She had loved beauty, riches, dignity, religion—she had loved her children when they came; but had she ever really loved him—the Daniel Ordway whom she had married? Were all pure women as passionless—as utterly detached—as she had shown herself to him from the beginning? And was her coldness, as he had always believed, but the outward body of that spiritual grace for which he had loved her? He had lavished abundantly out of his stormy nature; he had spent his immortal soul upon her in desperate determination to possess her utterly at her own price; and yet had she ever belonged to him, he questioned now, even in the supreme hours of their deepest union? Had her very innocence shut him out from her soul forever?

In the end the little world had closed over them both; he had felt himself slipping further—further—had made frantic efforts to regain his footing; and had gone down hopelessly at last. Those terrible years before his arrest crowded like minutes into his brain, and he knew now that there had been relief—comfort—almost tranquillity in his life in prison. The strain was lifted at last, and the days when he

had moved in dull hope or acute despair through the crowd in Wall Street were over forever. To hold a place in the little world one needed great wealth; and it had seemed to him in the time of temptation that this wealth was not a fugitive possession, but an inherent necessity — a thing which belonged to the inner structure of Lydia's nature.

A shudder ran over him, while he drew a convulsive breath like one in physical pain. The slow minutes in which he had waited for a rise in the market were still ticking in agony somewhere in his brain. Time moved on, yet those minutes never passed—his memory had become like the face of a clock where the hands pointed, motionless, day or night, to the same hour. Then hours, days, weeks, months, years, when he lived with ruin in his thoughts and the sound of merriment, which was like the pipe of hollow flutes, in his ears. At the end it came almost suddenly—the blow for which he had waited, the blow which brought something akin to relief because it ended the quivering torture of his suspense, and compelled, for the hour at least, decisive action. He had known that before evening he would be under arrest, and yet he had walked slowly along Fifth Avenue from his office to his home; he recalled now that he had even joked with a club wit, who had stopped him at the corner to divulge the latest bit of gossip. At the very instant when he felt himself to be approaching ruin in his house, he remembered that he had complained a little irritably of the breaking wrapper

of his cigar. Yet he was thinking then that he must reach his home in time to prevent his wife from keeping a luncheon engagement, of which she had spoken to him at breakfast; and ten minutes later it was with a sensation of relief that he met the blank face of his butler in the hall. On the staircase his daughter ran after him, her short white, beruffled skirts standing out stiffly like the skirts of a ballet dancer. She was taking her music lesson, she cried out, and she called to him to come into the music room and hear how wonderfully she could run her scales! Her blue eyes, which were his eyes in a child's face, looked joyously up at him from under the thatch of dark curls which she had inherited from him, not from her blond mother.

"Not now, Alice," he answered, almost impatiently, "not now—I will come a little later."

Then she darted back, and the stumbling music preceded him up the staircase to the door of his wife's dressing-room. When he entered Lydia was standing before her mirror, fastening a spotted veil with a diamond butterfly at the back of her blond head; and as she turned smilingly toward him, he put out his hand with a gesture of irritation.

"Take that veil off, Lydia, I can't see you for the spots," he said.

Complaisant always, she unfastened the diamond butterfly without a word, and taking off the veil, flung it carelessly across the golden-topped bottles upon her dressing-table.

"You look ill," she said with her charming smile; "shall I ring for Marie to bring you whiskey?"

At her words he turned from her, driven by a torment of pity which caused his voice to sound harsh and constrained in his own ears.

"No—no—don't put that on again," he protested, for while she waited she had taken up the spotted veil and the diamond pin.

Something in his tone startled her into attention, and moving a step forward, she stood before him on a white bearskin rug. Her face had hardly changed, yet in some way she seemed to have put him at a distance, and he felt all at once that he had never known her.

From the room downstairs he heard Alice's music lesson go on at broken intervals, the uncertain scales she ran now stopping, now beginning violently again. The sound wrought suddenly on his nerves like anger, and he felt that his voice was querulous in spite of the torment of pity at his heart.

"There 's no use putting on your veil," he said, "a warrant is out for my arrest and I must wait here till it comes."

His memory stopped now, as if it had snapped suddenly beneath the strain. After this there was a mere blank of existence upon which people and objects moved without visible impression. From that minute to this one appeared so short a time that he started up half expecting to hear Alice's scales filling Mrs.

Twine's empty lodgings. Then his eyes fell on the whitewashed walls, the smoking lamp, the bare table, and the little square window with the branches of the locust tree frosted against the pane.

Rising from the bed, he fell on his knees and pressed his quivering face to the patchwork quilt.

"Give me a new life, O God—give me a new life!"

## CHAPTER V

### At Tappahannock

After a sleepless night, he rose as soon as the dawn had broken, and sitting down before the pine table wrote a letter to Lydia, on a sheet of paper which had evidently been left in the drawer by the former lodger. "It is n't likely that you 'll ever want me," he added at the end, "but if you should happen to, remember that I am yours, as I have always been, for whatever I am worth." When he had sealed the envelope and written her name above that of the town of Botetourt, he put it into his pocket and went down to the dining-room, where he found Mrs. Twine pouring steaming coffee into a row of broken cups. A little mulatto girl, with her hair plaited in a dozen fine braids, was placing a dish of fried bacon at one end of the walnut-coloured oil-cloth on the table, around which the six children, already clothed and hungry, were beating an impatient tattoo with pewter spoons. Bill Twine, the father of the family, was evidently sleeping off a drunken headache—a weakness which appeared to afford his wife endless material for admonition and philosophy.

"Thar now, Canty," she was remarking to her son, "yo' po' daddy may not be anything to be proud of as a man, but I reckon he 's as big an example as

you 'll ever see. He 's had sermons p'inted at him from the pulpit; they 've took him up twice to the police court, an' if you 'll believe me, suh," she added with a kind of outraged pride to Ordway, "thar 's been a time when they 've had out the whole fire department to protect me."

The coffee though poor was hot, and while Ordway drank it, he listened with an attention not unmixed with sympathy to Mrs. Twine's continuous flow of speech. She was coarse and shrewish and unshapely, but his judgment was softened by the marks of anxious thought on her forehead and the disfigurements of honest labour on her hands. Any toil appeared to him now to be invested with peculiar dignity; and he felt, sitting there at her slovenly breakfast table, that he was closer to the enduring heart of humanity than he had been among the shallow refinements of his past life. Mrs. Twine was unpleasant, but at her worst he felt her to be the real thing.

"Not that I 'm blamin' Bill, suh, as much as some folks," she proceeded charitably, while she helped her youngest child to gravy, "for it made me downright sick myself to hear them carryin' on over his beatin' his own wife jest as much as if he 'd been beatin' somebody else's. An' I ain't one, when it comes to that, to put up with a white-livered, knock-kneed, pulin' sort of a critter, as I told the Jedge a-settin' upon his bench. When a woman is obleeged to take a strappin' thar 's some real satisfaction in her feelin' that she takes it from a man—an' the kind that would lay on softly with never a broken head

to show for it—well, he ain't the kind, suh, that I could have helt in any respect an' honour. And as to that, as I said to 'em right then an' thar, take the manly health an' spirit out o' Bill, an' he 's jest about as decent an' law abidin' as the rest. Why, when he was laid up with malaria, he never so much as rized his hand agin me, an' it 'll be my belief untwel my dyin' day that chills an' fever will keep a man moral when all the sermons sence Moses will leave him unteched. Feed him low an' work him hard, an' you kin make a saint out of most any male critter, that 's my way of thinkin'."

While she talked she was busily selecting the choicest bit of bacon for Bill's plate, and as Ordway left the house a little later, he saw her toiling up the staircase with her husband's breakfast on a tin tray in her hands.

"If you think I 'm goin' to set an' wait all day for you to get out o' bed, you 've jest about clean lost yo' wits, Bill Twine," she remarked in furious tones, as she flung open a door on the landing above.

Out of doors Ordway found that the wind had died down, though a sharp edge of frost was still in the air. The movement of the day had already begun; and as he passed the big house on the brow of the hill he saw a pretty girl, with her hair tied back with a velvet ribbon, run along the gravelled walk to meet the postman at the gate. A little farther, when he had reached the corner, he turned back to hand his letter to the postman, and found to his surprise that the pretty girl was still gazing after him. No possible

interest could attach to her in his thoughts; and with a careless acknowledgment of her beauty, she faded from his consciousness as rapidly as if she had been a ray of sunshine which he had admired as he passed along. Then as he turned into the main street at the corner, he saw that Emily Brooke was riding slowly up the hill on her old white horse. She still wore her red cape, which fell over the saddle on one side, and completely hid the short riding-skirt beneath. On her head there was a small knitted Tam-o'-shanter cap, and this, with the easy freedom of her seat in the saddle, gave her an air which was gallant rather than graceful. The more feminine adjective hardly seemed to apply to her at the moment; she looked brave, strong, buoyant, a creature that had not as yet become aware of its sex. Yet she was older, he discovered now, than he had at first imagined her to be. In the barn he had supposed her age to be not more than twenty years; seen in the morning light it was impossible to decide whether she was a year younger or ten years older than he had believed. The radiant energy in her look belonged, after all, less to the accident of youth than to some enduring quality of spirit.

As she neared him, she looked up from her horse's neck, rested her eyes upon him for an instant, and smiled brightly, much as a charming boy might have done. Then, just as she was about to pass on, the girth of her saddle slipped under her, and she was thrown lightly to the ground, while the old horse stopped and stood perfectly motionless above her.

"My skirt has caught in the stirrup," she said to Ordway, and while he bent to release her, he noticed that she clung, not to his arm, but to the neck of the horse for support.

To his surprise there was neither embarrassment nor amusement in her voice. She spoke with the cool authority which had impressed him during the incident of the ram's attack upon "Sis Mehitable."

"I don't think it is quite safe yet," he said, after he had drawn the rotten girth as tight as he dared. "It looks as if it would n't last, you see."

"Well, I dare say, it may be excused after forty years of service," she returned, smiling.

"What? this saddle? It does look a little quaint when one examines it."

"Oh, it 's been repaired, but even then one must forgive an old servant for growing decrepit."

"Then you 'll ride it again?" he asked, seeing that she was about to mount.

"Of course—this is n't my first tumble—but Major expects them now and he knows how to behave. So do I," she added, laughing, "you see it does n't take me by surprise."

"Yes, I see it does n't," he answered gaily.

"Then if you chance to be about the next time it happens, I hope it won't disturb you either," she remarked, as she rode up the hill.

The meeting lingered in Ordway's mind with a freshness which was associated less with the incident itself than with some vivid quality in the appearance of the girl. Her face, her voice, her carriage—even

the little brown curls blowing on her temples, all united in his thoughts to form a memory in which Alice appeared to hold a place. Why should this country girl, he wondered, bring back to him so clearly the figure of his daughter?

But there was no room for a memory in his life just now, and by the time he reached Baxter's Warehouse, he had forgotten the interest aroused in him a moment before. Baxter had not yet appeared in his office, but two men, belonging evidently to the labouring class, were talking together under the brick archway. When Ordway joined them they did not interrupt their conversation, which he found, after a minute, to concern the domestic and financial troubles of the one whom he judged to be the poorer of the two. He was a meanly clad, wretched looking workman, with a shock of uncombed sandy hair, a cowed manner, and the expression of one who has been beaten into apathy rather than into submission. A sordid pathos in his voice and figure brought Ordway a step closer to his side, and after a moment's careless attention, he found his mind adjusting itself to the small financial problems in which the man had become entangled. The workman had been forced to borrow upon his pathetic personal securities; and in meeting from year to year the exorbitant rate of interest, he had paid back several times the sum of the original debt. Now his wife was ill, with an incurable cancer; he had no hope, as he advanced beyond middle age, of any increase in his earning capacity, and the debt under which he had struggled

so long had become at the end an intolerable burden. His wife had begged him to consult a lawyer—but who, he questioned doggedly, would take an interest in him since he had no money for a fee? He was afraid of lawyers anyway, for he could give you a hundred cases where they had stood banded together against the poor.

As Ordway listened to the story, he felt for an instant a return of his youthful enthusiasm, and standing there amid the tobacco stems in Baxter's warehouse, he remembered a great flour trust from which he had withdrawn because it seemed to him to bear unjustly upon the small, isolated farmers. Beyond this he went back still further to his college days, when during his vacation, he had read Virginia law in the office of his uncle, Richard Ordway, in the town of Botetourt. He could see the shining rows of legal volumes in the walnut bookcases, the engraving of Latane's Burial, framed in black wood above the mantel, and against this background the silent, gray haired, self-righteous old man so like his father. Through the window, he could see still the sparrows that built in the ivied walls of the old church.

With a start he came back to the workman, who was unfolding his troubles in an abandon of misery under the archway.

"If you 'll talk things over with me to-night when we get through work, I think I may be able to straighten them out for you," he said.

The man stared at him out of his dogged eyes with a helpless incredulity.

"But I ain't got any money," he responded sullenly, as if driven to the defensive.

"Well, we 'll see," said Ordway, "I don't want your money,"

"You want something, though—my money or my vote, and I ain't got either."

Ordway laughed shortly. "I?—oh, I just want the fun," he answered.

The beginning was trivial enough, the case sordid, and the client only a dull-witted labourer; but to Ordway it came as the commencement of the new life for which he had prayed—the life which would find its centre not in possession, but in surrender, which would seek as its achievement not personal happiness, but the joy of service.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Pretty Daughter of the Mayor

The pretty girl whom Ordway had seen on the gravelled walk was Milly Trend, the only child of the Mayor of Tappahannock. People said of Jasper Trend that his daughter was the one soft spot in a heart that was otherwise as small and hard as a silver dollar, and of Milly Trend the same people said—well, that she was pretty. Her prettiness was invariably the first and the last thing to be mentioned about her. Whatever sterner qualities she may have possessed were utterly obscured by an exterior which made one think of peach blossoms and spring sunshine. She had a bunch of curls the colour of ripe corn, which she wore tied back from her neck with a velvet ribbon; her eyes were the eyes of a baby; and her mouth had an adorable little trick of closing over her small, though slightly prominent teeth. The one flaw in her face was this projection of her teeth, and when she looked at herself in the glass it was her habit to bite her lips closely together until the irregular ivory line was lost. It was this fault, perhaps, which kept her prettiness, though it was superlative in its own degree, from ever rising to the height of beauty. In Milly's opinion it had meant the difference between the

glory of a world-wide reputation and the lesser honour of reigning as the acknowledged belle of Tappahannock. She remembered that the magnificent manager of a theatrical company, a gentleman who wore a fur-lined coat and a top hat all day long, had almost lost his train while he stopped to look back at her on the crowded platform of the station. Her heart had beat quickly at the tribute, yet even in that dazzling minute she had felt a desperate certainty that her single imperfection would decide her future. But for her teeth, she was convinced to-day, that he might have returned.

If a woman cannot be a heroine in reality, perhaps the next best thing is to look as if she might have been one in the age of romance; and this was what Milly Trend's appearance suggested to perfection. Her manner of dressing, the black velvet ribbon on her flaxen curls, her wide white collars open at her soft throat, her floating sky-blue sashes and the delicate peach bloom of her cheeks and lips—all these combined to produce a poetic atmosphere about an exceedingly poetic little figure. Being plain she would probably have made currant jelly for her pastor, and have taught sedately in the infant class in Sunday school: being pretty she read extravagant romances and dreamed strange adventures of fascinating highwaymen on lonely roads.

But many a woman who has dreamed of a highwayman at eighteen has compromised with a bank clerk at twenty-two. Even at Tappahannock—the veriest prose piece of a town—romance might sometimes

bud and blossom, though it usually brought nothing more dangerous than respectability to fruit. Milly had read Longfellow and *Lucille*, and her heroic ideal had been taken bodily from one of Bulwer's novels. She had played the graceful part of heroine in a hundred imaginary dramas; yet in actual life she had been engaged for two years to a sandy-haired, freckled face young fellow, who chewed tobacco, and bought the dry leaf in lots for a factory in Richmond. From romance to reality is a hard distance, and the most passionate dreamer is often the patient drudge of domestic service.

And yet even to-day Milly was not without secret misgivings as to the wisdom of her choice. She knew he was not her hero, but in her short visits to larger cities she had met no one who had come nearer her ideal lover. To be sure she had seen this ideal, in highly coloured glimpses, upon the stage—though these gallant gentlemen in trunks had never so much as condescended to glance across the foot-lights to the little girl in the dark third row of the balcony. Then, too, all the ladies upon the stage were beautiful enough for any hero, and just here she was apt to remember dismally the fatal projection of her teeth.

So, perhaps, after all, Harry Banks was as near Olympus as she could hope to approach; and there was a mild consolation in the thought that there was probably more sentiment in the inner than in the outward man. Whatever came of it, she had learned that in a prose age it is safer to think only in prose.

On the morning upon which Ordway had first

passed her gate, she had left the breakfast table at the postman's call, and had run down the gravelled walk to receive a letter from Mr. Banks, who was off on a short business trip for his firm. With the letter in her hand she had turned to find Ordway's blue eyes fixed in careless admiration upon her figure; and for one breathless instant she had felt her insatiable dream rise again and clutch at her heart. Some subtle distinction in his appearance—an unlikeness to the masculine portion of Tappahannock—had caught her eye in spite of his common and ill-fitting clothes. Though she had known few men of his class, the sensitive perceptions of the girl had made her instantly aware of the difference between him and Harry Banks. For a moment her extravagant fancy dwelt on his figure—on this distinction which she had noticed, on his square dark face and the singular effect of his bright blue eyes. Then turning back in the yard, she went slowly up the gravelled walk, while she read with a vague feeling of disappointment the love letter written laboriously by Mr. Banks. It was, doubtless, but the average love letter of the average plain young man, but to Milly in her rosy world of fiction, it appeared suddenly as if there had protruded upon her attention one of the great, ugly, wholesome facts of life. What was the use, she wondered, in being beautiful if her love letters were to be filled with enthusiastic accounts of her lover's prowess in the tobacco market?

At the breakfast table Jasper Trend was pouring maple syrup on the buckwheat cakes he had piled on his plate, and at the girl's entrance he spoke without

removing his gaze from the plated silver pitcher in his hand.

"Any letters, daughter?" he inquired, carefully running his knife along the mouth of the pitcher to catch the last drop of syrup.

"One," said Milly, as she sat down beside the coffee pot and looked at her father with a ripple of annoyance in her babyish eyes.

"I reckon I can guess about that all right," remarked Jasper with his cackling chuckle, which was as little related to a sense of humour as was the beating of a tin plate. He was a long, scraggy man, with drab hair that grew in scallops on his narrow forehead and a large nose where the prominent red veins turned purple when he became excited.

"There 's a stranger in town, father," said Milly as she gave him his second cup of coffee. "I think he is boarding at Mrs. Twine's."

"A drummer, I reckon—thar 're a plenty of 'em about this season."

"No, I don't believe he is a drummer—he is n't—is n't quite so sparky looking. But I wish you would n't say 'thar,' father. You promised me you would n't do it."

"Well, it ain't stood in the way of my getting on," returned Jasper without resentment. Had Milly told him to shave his head, he might have protested freely, but in the end he would have gone out obediently to his barber. Yet people outside said that he ground the wages of his workers in the cotton mills down to starvation point, and that he had been elected Mayor

not through popularity, but through terror. It was rumoured even that he stood with his wealth behind the syndicate of saloons which was giving an ugly local character to the town. But whatever his public vices may have been, his private life was securely hedged about by the paternal virtues.

"I can't place him, but I'm sure he isn't a 'buyer,'" repeated Milly, after a moment's devotion to the sugar bowl.

"Well, I'll let you know when I see him," responded Jasper as he left the table and got into his overcoat, while Milly jumped up to wrap his neck in a blue spotted muffler.

When he had gone from the house, she took out her lover's letter again, but it proved, on a second trial, even more unsatisfactory than she had found it to be at her first reading As a schoolgirl Milly had known every attribute of her divinity from the chivalry of his soul to the shining gloss upon his boots—but to-day there remained to her only the despairing conviction that he was unlike Banks. Banks appeared to her suddenly in the hard prosaic light in which he, on his own account, probably viewed his tobacco. Even her trousseau and the lace of her wedding gown ceased to afford her the shadow of consolation, since she remembered that neither of these accessories would occupy in marriage quite so prominent a place as Banks.

The next day Ordway passed at the same hour, still on the opposite side of the street. After this she began to watch regularly for his figure, looking for

it when it appeared on Mrs. Twine's little porch, and following it wistfully until it was lost beyond the new brick church at the corner. She was not aware of cultivating a facile sentiment about the stranger, but place a riotous imagination in an empty house and it requires little effort to weave a romance from the opposite side of the street. Distance, that subtle magnifier of attachments, had come to her aid now as it had failed her in the person of Harry Banks. Even from across the street it was impossible to invest Mr. Banks with any quality which might have suggested an historic background or a mysterious past. He was flagrantly, almost outrageously himself; in no fictitious circumstances could he have appeared as anything except the unvarnished fact that he was. No legendary light could have glorified his features or improved the set of his trousers—which had taken their shape and substance from the legs within. With these features and in these trousers, she felt that he must usurp the sacred precincts where her dream had dwelt. "It would all be so easy if one could only be born where one belongs," she cried out hopelessly, in the unconscious utterance of a philosophy larger than her own.

And so as the week went by, she allowed her rosy fancies to surround the figure that passed three times daily along the sidewalk across the way. In the morning he walked by with a swinging stride; at midday he passed rapidly, absorbed in thought; in the evening he came back slowly, sometimes stopping to watch the sunset from the brow of the

hill. Not since the first morning had he turned his blue eyes toward Milly's gate.

At the end of the month Mr. Banks returned to Tappahannock from a business trip through the tobacco districts. He was an ugly, freckled face, sandy-haired young fellow—an excellent judge of tobacco—with a simple soul that attired itself in large checks, usually of a black and white variety. On the day of his first visit to Milly he wore a crimson necktie pierced by a scarfpin bearing a turtle-dove in diamonds.

"Who 's that fellow over there?" he inquired as Ordway came up the hill to his dinner. "I wonder if he 's the chap Hudge was telling me about at breakfast?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Milly, in a voice that sounded flat in her own ears. "Nobody knows anything about him, father says. But what was Hudge telling you?" she asked, impelled by a devouring yet timid curiosity.

"Well, if he 's the man I mean, he seems to be a kind of revivalist out of a job—or something or other queer. Hudge says he broke up a fight last Saturday evening in Kelly's saloon—that 's the place you 've never heard the name of, I reckon," he added hesitatingly, "it 's where all the factory hands gather after work on Saturday to drink up their week's wages."

For once Milly's interest was stronger than her modesty.

"And did he fight?" she demanded in a suspense that was almost breathless.

"He was n't there, you know—only passing along the street outside, at least that 's what they say—when the rumpus broke out. Then he went in through the window and——"

"And?" repeated Milly, with an entrancing vision of heroic blows, for beneath her soft exterior the blood of the primitive woman flowed.

"And preached!" finished Banks, with a prodigious burst of merriment.

"Preached?" gasped Milly, "do you mean a sermon?"

"Not a regular sermon, but he spoke just like a preacher for a solid hour. Before he 'd finished the men who were drunk were crying like babies and the men who were n't were breaking their necks to sign the pledge—at any rate that 's something like the tale they tell. There was never such speaking (Hudge says he was there) heard before in Tappahannock, and Kelly is as mad as a hornet because he swears the town is going dry."

"And he did n't strike a single blow?" asked Milly, with a feeling of disappointment.

"Why, he had those drunken fools all blubbering like kids," said Banks, "and then when it was over he got hold of Kit Berry (he started the row, you know) and carried him all the way home to the little cottage in the hollow across the town where Kit lives with his mother. Next Sunday if it 's fine there 's going to be an open air meeting in Baxter's field."

There was a sore little spot in Milly's heart, a vague

sentiment of disenchantment. Her house of dreams, which she had reared so patiently, stood cold and tenantless once more.

"Did you ever find out his name?" she asked, with a last courageous hope.

"Smith," replied Banks, with luminous simplicity. "The boys have nick-named him 'Ten Commandment Smith.' "

"Ten Commandment Smith?" echoed Milly in a lifeless voice. Her house of dreams had tottered at the blow and fallen from its foundation stone.

## CHAPTER VII

### Shows the Graces of Adversity

On the morning after the episode in the barroom which Banks had described to Milly, Ordway found Baxter awaiting him in a condition which in a smaller person would have appeared to be a flutter of excitement.

"So you got mixed up in a barroom row last night, I hear, Smith?"

"Well, hardly that," returned Ordway, smiling as he saw the other's embarrassment break out in drops of perspiration upon his forehead. "I was in it, I admit, but I can't exactly say that I was 'mixed up.' "

"You got Kit Berry out, eh?—and took him home."

"Nothing short of a sober man could have done it. He lives on the other side of the town in Bullfinch's Hollow."

"Oh, I 've been there," said Baxter, "I 've taken him home myself."

The boyish sparkle had leaped to Ordway's eyes which appeared in the animation of the moment to lend an expression of gaiety to his face. As Baxter looked at him he felt something of the charm which had touched the drunken crowd in the saloon.

"His mother was at my house before breakfast," he said, in a tone that softened as he went on until it sounded as if his whole perspiring person had melted into it. "She was in a great state, poor creature, for it seemed that when Kit woke up this morning he promised her never to touch another drop."

"Well, I hope he 'll keep his word, but I doubt it," responded Ordway. He thought of the bare little room he had seen last night, of the patched garments drying before the fire, of the scant supper spread upon the table, and of the gray-haired, weeping woman who had received his burden from him.

"He may—for a week," commented Baxter, and he added with a big, shaking laugh, "they tell me you gave 'em a sermon that was as good as a preacher's."

"Nonsense. I got angry and spoke a few words, that 's all."

"Well, if they were few, they seem to have been pretty pointed. I hear Kelly closed his place two hours before midnight. Even William Cotton went home without falling once, he said."

"There was a good reason for that. I happened to have some information Cotton wanted."

"I know," said Baxter, drawing out the words with a lingering emphasis while his eyes searched Ordway's face with a curiosity before which the younger man felt himself redden painfully. "Cotton told me you got him out of a scrape as well as a lawyer could have done."

"I remembered the law and wrote it down for him, that 's all."

"Have you ever practised law in Virginia?"

"I 've never practised anywhere, but I intended to when—" he was going to add "when I finished college," but with a sudden caution, he stopped short and then selected his words more carefully, "when I was a boy. I read a good deal then and some of it still sticks in my memory."

"I see," commented Baxter. His heart swelled until he became positively uncomfortable, and he coughed loudly in the effort to appear perfectly indifferent. What was it about the chap, he questioned, that had pulled at him from the start? Was it only the peculiar mingling of pathos and gaiety in his look?

"Well, I would n't set about reforming things too much if I were you," he said at last, "it ain't worth it, for even when people accept the reforms they are pretty likely to reject the reformer. A man's got to have a mighty tough stomach to be able to do good immoderately. But all the same," he concluded heartily, "you 're the right stuff and I like you. I respect pluck no matter whether it comes out in preaching or in blows. I reckon, by the way, if you 'd care to turn bookkeeper, you 'd be worth as good as a hundred a month to me."

There was a round coffee stain, freshly spilled at breakfast, on his cravat, and Ordway's eyes were fixed upon it with a kind of fascination during the whole of his speech. The very slovenliness of the

man—the unshaven cheeks, the wilted collar, the spotted necktie, the loosely fitting alpaca coat he wore, all seemed in some inexplicable way, to emphasise the large benignity of his aspect. Strangely enough his failures as a gentleman appeared to add to his impressiveness as a man. One felt that his faults were merely virtues swelled to abnormal proportions—as the carelessness in his dress was but a degraded form of the lavish generosity of his heart.

"To tell the truth, I 'd hoped for that all along," said Ordway, withdrawing his gaze with an effort from the soiled cravat. "Do you want me to start in at the books to-day?"

For an instant Baxter hesitated; then he coughed and went on as if he found difficulty in selecting the words that would convey his meaning.

"Well, if you don't mind there 's a delicate little matter I 'd like you to attend to first. Being a stranger I thought it would be easier for you than for me—have you ever heard anybody speak of Beverly Brooke?"

The interest quickened in Ordway's face.

"Why, yes. I came along the road one day with a farmer who gave me his whole story—Adam Whaley, I heard afterward, was his name."

Baxter whistled. "Oh, I reckon, he hardly told you the whole story—for I don't believe there 's anybody living except myself who knows what a darn fool Mr. Beverly is. That man has never done an honest piece of work in his life; he 's spent every red cent of his wife's money, and his sister's too, in

some wild goose kind of speculation—and yet, bless my soul, he has the face to strut in here any day and lord it over me just as if he were his grandfather's ghost or George Washington. It 's queer about those old families, now ain't it? When they begin to peter out it ain't just an ordinary petering, but a sort of mortal rottenness that takes 'em root and branch."

"And so I am to interview this interesting example of degeneration?" asked Ordway, smiling.

"You've got to make him understand that he can't ship me any more of his worthless tobacco," exclaimed Baxter in an outburst of indignation. "Do you know what he does, sir?—Well, he raises a lazy, shiftless, worm-eaten crop of tobacco in an old field—plants it too late, tops it too late, cuts it too late, cures it too late, and then lets it lie around in some leaky smokehouse until it isn't fit for a hog to chew. After he has left it there to rot all winter, he gathers the stuff up on the first pleasant day in spring and gets an old nigger to cart it to me in an open wagon. The next day he lounges in here with his palavering ways, and demands the highest price in the market—and I give it to him! That 's the damned outrage of it, I give it to him!" concluded Baxter with an excitement in which his huge person heaved like a shaken mountain. "I 've bought his trash for twenty years and ground it into snuff because I was afraid to refuse a Brooke—but Brooke or no Brooke there's an end to it now," he turned and waved his hand furiously to a pile of tobacco lying on the warehouse

floor, "there 's his trash and it ain't fit even for snuff!"

He led Ordway back into the building, picked up several leaves from the pile, smelt them, and threw them down with a contemptuous oath. "Worm-eaten, frost-bitten, mildewed. I want you to go out to Cedar Hill and tell the man that his stuff ain't fit for anything but fertiliser," he went on. "If he wants it he 'd better come for it and haul it away."

"And if he refuses?"

"He most likely will—then tell him I 'll throw it into the ditch."

"Oh, I 'll tell him," responded Ordway, and he was aware of a peculiar excitement in the prospect of an encounter with the redoubtable Mr. Beverly. "I 'll do my best," he added, going through the archway, while Baxter followed him with a few last words of instruction and advice. The big man's courage had evidently begun to ebb, for as Ordway passed into the street, he hurried after him to suggest that he should approach the subject with as much delicacy as he possessed. "I would n't butt at Mr. Beverly, if I were you," he cautioned, "just edge around and work in slowly when you get the chance."

But the advice was wasted upon Ordway, for he had started out in an impatience not unmixed with anger. Who was this fool of a Brooke? he wondered, and what power did he possess that kept Tappahannock in a state of slavery? He was glad that Baxter had sent him on the errand, and the next

minute he laughed aloud because the big man had been too timid to come in person.

He had reached the top of the hill, and was about to turn into the road he had taken his first night in Tappahannock, when a woman, wrapped in a shawl, hurried across the street from one of the smaller houses fronting upon the green.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but are you the man that helped William Cotton?"

Clearly William Cotton was bringing him into notice. At the thought Ordway looked down upon his questioner with a sensation that was almost one of pleasure.

"He needed business advice and I gave it, that was all," he answered.

"But you wrote down the whole case for him so that he could understand it and speak for himself," she said, catching her breath in a sob, as she pulled her thin shawl together. "You got him out of his troubles and asked nothing, so I hoped you might be willing to do as much by me. I am a widow with five little children, and though I 've paid every penny I could scrape together for the mortgage, the farm is to be sold over our heads and we have nowhere to go."

Again the glow that was like the glow of pleasure illuminated Ordway's mind.

"There 's not one chance in a hundred that I can help you," he said; "in the case of William Cotton it was a mere accident. Still if you will tell me where you live, I will come to you this evening and talk

matters over. If I can help you, I promise you I will with pleasure."

"And for nothing? I am very poor."

He shook his head with a laugh. "Oh, I get more fun out of it than you could understand!"

After writing down the woman's name in his notebook, he passed into the country road and bent his thoughts again upon the approaching visit to Mr. Beverly.

When he reached Cedar Hill, which lay a sombre shadow against the young green of the landscape, he saw that the dead cedars still lay where they had fallen across the avenue. Evidently the family temper had assumed an opposite, though equally stubborn form, in the person of the girl in the red cape, and she had, he surmised, refused to allow Beverly to profit by his desecration even to the extent of selling the trees he had already cut down. Was it from a sentiment, or as a warning, he wondered, that she left the great cedars barring the single approach to the house? In either case the magnificent insolence of her revenge moved him to an acknowledgment of her spirit and her justice.

In the avenue a brood of young turkeys were scratching in the fragrant dust shed by the trees; and at his approach they scattered and fled before him. It was long evidently since a stranger had penetrated into the melancholy twilight of the cedars; for the flutter of the turkeys, he discovered presently, was repeated in an excited movement he felt rather than saw as he ascended the stone steps and knocked at the door.

The old hound he had seen the first night rose from under a bench on the porch, and came up to lick his hand; a window somewhere in the right wing shut with a loud noise; and through the bare old hall, which he could see from the half open door, a breeze blew dispersing an odour of hot soapsuds. The hall was dim and empty except for a dilapidated sofa in one corner, on which a brown and white setter lay asleep, and a rusty sword which clanked against the wall with a regular, swinging motion. In response to his repeated knocks there was a sound of slow steps on the staircase, and a handsome, shabbily dressed man, holding a box of dominoes, came to the door and held out his hand with an apologetic murmur.

"I beg your pardon, but the wind makes such a noise I did not hear your knock. Will you come inside or do you prefer to sit on the porch where we can get the view?"

As he spoke he edged his way courteously across the threshold and with a hospitable wave of his hand, sat down upon one of the pine benches against the decaying railing. In spite of the shabbiness of his clothes he presented a singularly attractive, even picturesque appearance, from the abundant white hair above his forehead to his small, shapely feet encased now in an ancient pair of carpet slippers. His figure was graceful and well built, his brown eyes soft and melancholy, and the dark moustache drooping over his mouth had been trained evidently into an immaculate precision. His moustache, however, was the one immaculate feature of his person, for

even his carpet slippers were dirty and worn threadbare in places. Yet his beauty, which was obscured in the first view by what in a famous portrait might have been called "the tone of time," produced, after a closer and more sympathetic study, an effect which, upon Ordway at least, fell little short of the romantic. In his youth Beverly had been, probably, one of the handsomest men of his time, and this distinction, it was easy to conjecture, must have been the occasion, if not the cause, of his ruin. Even now, pompous and slovenly as he appeared, it was difficult to resist a certain mysterious fascination which he still possessed. When he left Tappahannock Ordway had felt only a humorous contempt for the owner of Cedar Hill, but sitting now beside him on the hard pine bench, he found himself yielding against his will to an impulse of admiration. Was there not a certain spiritual kinship in the fact that they were both failures in life?

"You are visiting Tappahannock, then?" asked Beverly with his engaging smile; "I go in seldom or I should perhaps have seen you. When a man gets as old and as much of an invalid as I am, he usually prefers to spend his days by the fireside in the bosom of his family."

The bloom of health was in his cheeks, yet as he spoke he pressed his hand to his chest with the habitual gesture of an invalid. "A chronic trouble which has prevented my taking an active part in the world's affairs," he explained, with a sad, yet cheerful dignity as of one who could enliven tragedy with a

comic sparkle. "I had my ambitions once, sir," he added, "but we will not speak of them for they are over, and at this time of my life I can do little more than try to amuse myself with a box of dominoes."

As he spoke he placed the box on the bench between them and began patiently matching the little ivory blocks. Ordway expressed a casual sympathy, and then, forgetting Baxter's warning, he attempted to bring the conversation to a practical level.

"I am employed now at Baxter's warehouse," he began, "and the object of my call is to speak with you about your last load of tobacco."

"Ah!" said Beverly, with warming interest, "it is a sufficient recommendation to have come from Robert Baxter—for that man has been the best, almost the only, friend I have had in life. It is impossible to overestimate either his character or my admiration. He has come to my assistance, sir, when I hardly knew where to turn for help. If you are employed by him, you are indeed to be envied."

"I am entirely of your opinion," observed Ordway, "but the point this morning——"

"Well, we 'll let that rest a while now," interrupted Beverly, pushing the dominoes away, and turning his beautiful, serious face upon his companion. "When there is an opportunity for me to speak of Baxter's generosity, I feel that I cannot let it escape me. Something tells me that you will understand and pardon my enthusiasm. There is no boy like an old boy, sir."

His voice broke, and drawing a ragged handkerchief from the pocket of his corduroy coat, he blew his nose and wiped away two large teardrops from his eyes. After such an outburst of sentiment it seemed a positive indecency to inform him that Baxter had threatened to throw his tobacco into a ditch.

"He regrets very much that your crop was a failure this year," said Ordway, after what he felt to be a respectable pause.

"And yet," returned Beverly, with his irrepressible optimism, "if things had been worse it might even have rotted in the ground. As it was, I never saw more beautiful seedlings—they were perfect specimens. Had not the tobacco worms and the frost and the leak in the smokehouse all combined against me, I should have raised the most splendid crop in Virginia, sir." The spectacle of this imaginary crop suffused his face with a glow of ardour. "My health permits me to pay little attention to the farm," he continued in his eloquent voice, "I see it falling to ruins about me, and I am fortunate in being able to enjoy the beauty of its decay. Yes, my crop was a failure, I admit," he added, with a touching cheerfulness, "it lay several months too long in the barn before I could get it sent to the warehouse—but this was my misfortune, not my fault, as I am sure Robert Baxter will understand."

"He will find it easier to understand the case than to sell the tobacco, I fancy."

"However that may be, he is aware that I place the

utmost confidence in his judgment. What he does will be the right thing, sir."

This confession of artless trust was so overpowering that for a moment Ordway hung back, feeling that any ground would be dangerous ground upon which to proceed. The very absorption in which Beverly arranged the dominoes upon the bench added to the childlike simplicity of his appearance. Then a sudden irritation against the man possessed him, for he remembered the girl in the red cape and the fallen cedars. From where he sat now they were hidden by the curve of the avenue, but the wonderful trees, which shed their rich gloom almost upon the roof of the house, made him realise afresh the full extent of Beverly's folly. In the fine spring sunshine whatever beauties were left in the ruined place showed in an intenser and more vernal aspect. Every spear of grass on the lawn was tipped with light, and the young green leaves on the lilacs stood out as if illuminated on a golden background. In one of the ivy-covered eaves a wren was building, and he could see the flutter of a bluebird in an ancient cedar.

"It is a beautiful day," remarked Beverly, pensively, "but the lawn needs trimming." His gaze wandered gently over the tangled sheep mint, orchard grass and Ailantus shoots which swept from the front steps to the fallen fence which had once surrounded the place, and he added with an outburst of animation, "I must tell Micah to turn in the cattle."

Remembering the solitary cow he had seen in a sheltered corner of the barn, Ordway bit back a smile as he rose and held out his hand.

"After all, I have n't delivered my message," he said, "which was to the effect that the tobacco is practically unfit for use. Baxter told me to request you to send for it at your convenience."

Beverly gathered up his dominoes, and rising with no appearance of haste, turned upon him an expression of suffering dignity.

"Such an act upon my part," he said, "would be a reflection upon Baxter's ability as a merchant, and after thirty years of friendship I refuse to put an affront upon him. I would rather, sir, lose every penny my tobacco might bring me."

His sincerity was so admirable, that for a moment it obscured even in Ordway's mind the illusion upon which it rested. When a man is honestly ready to sacrifice his fortune in the cause of friendship, it becomes the part of mere vulgarity to suggest to him that his affairs are in a state of penury.

"Then it must be used for fertilisers or thrown away," said Ordway, shortly.

"I trust myself entirely in Baxter's hands," replied Beverly, in sad but noble tones, "whatever he does will be the best that could be done under the circumstances. You may assure him of this with my compliments."

"Well, I fear, there 's nothing further to be said," remarked Ordway; and he was about to make his

final good-bye, when a faded lady, wrapped in a Paisley shawl, appeared in the doorway and came out upon the porch.

"Amelia," said Beverly, "allow me to present Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith, Mrs. Brooke."

Mrs. Brooke smiled at him wanly with a pretty, thin-lipped mouth and a pair of large rather prominent eyes, which had once been gray but were now washed into a cloudy drab. She was still pretty in a hopeless, depressed, ineffectual fashion; and though her skirt was frayed about the edges and her shoes run down at the heel, her pale, fawn-coloured hair was arranged in elaborate spirals and the hand she held out to Ordway was still delicately fine and white. She was like a philosopher, who, having sunk into a universal pessimism of thought, preserves, in spite of himself, a small belief or so in the minor pleasures of existence. Out of the general wreck of her appearance she had clung desperately to the beauties of her hair and hands.

"I had hoped you would stay to dinner," she remarked in her listless manner to Ordway. Fate had whipped her into submission, but there was that in her aspect which never permitted one for an instant to forget the whipping. If her husband had dominated by his utter incapacity, she had found a smaller consolation in feeling that though she had been obliged to drudge she had never learned to do it well. To do it badly, indeed, had become at last the solitary proof that by right of birth she was entitled not to do it at all.

At Ordway's embarrassed excuse she made no effort to insist, but stood, smiling like a ghost of her own past prettiness, in the doorway. Behind her the bare hall and the dim staircase appeared more empty, more gloomy, more forlornly naked than they had done before.

Again Ordway reached for his hat, and prepared to pick his way carefully down the sunken steps; but this time he was arrested by the sound of smothered laughter at the side of the house, which ran back to the vegetable garden. A moment later the girl in the red cape appeared running at full speed across the lawn, pursued by several shrieking children that followed closely at her skirts. Her clear, ringing laugh—the laugh of youth and buoyant health—held Ordway motionless for an instant upon the porch; then as she came nearer he saw that she held an old, earth-covered spade in her hands and that her boots and short woollen skirt were soiled with stains from the garden beds. But the smell of the warm earth that clung about her seemed only to increase the vitality and freshness in her look. Her vivid animation, her sparkling glance, struck him even more forcibly than they had done in the street of Tappahannock.

At sight of Ordway her laugh was held back breathlessly for an instant; then breaking out again, it began afresh with redoubled merriment, and sinking with exhaustion on the lowest step, she let the spade fall to the ground while she buried her wind-blown head in her hands.

"I beg your pardon," she stammered presently, lifting her radiant brown eyes, "but I 've run so fast that I 'm quite out of breath." Stopping with an effort she sought in vain to extinguish her laughter in the curls of the smallest child.

"Emily," said Beverly with dignity, "allow me to present Mr. Smith."

The girl looked up from the step; and then, rising, smiled brightly upon Ordway over the spade which she had picked up from the ground.

"I can't shake hands," she explained, "because I've been spading the garden."

If she recognised him for the tramp who had slept in her barn there was no hint of it in her voice or manner.

"Do you mean, Emily," asked Beverly, in his plaintive voice, "that you have been actually digging in the ground?"

"Actually," repeated Emily, in a manner which made Ordway suspect that the traditional feminine softness was not included among her virtues. "I actually stepped on dirt and saw—worms."

"But where is Micah?"

"Micah has an attack of old age. He was eighty-two yesterday,"

"Is it possible?" remarked Beverly, and the discovery appeared to afford him ground for cheerful meditation.

"No, it is n't possible, but it 's true," returned the girl, with good-humoured merriment. "As there are only two able-bodied persons on the place, the mare and I, it seemed to me that one of us had better take

a hand at the spade. But I had to leave off after the first round," she added to Ordway, showing him her right hand, from the palm of which the skin had been rubbed away. She was so much like a gallant boy that Ordway felt an impulse to take the hand in his own and examine it more carefully.

"Well, I 'm very much surprised to hear that Micah is so old," commented Beverly, dwelling upon the single fact which had riveted his attention. "I must be making him a little present upon his birthday."

The girl's eyes flashed under her dark lashes, but remembering Ordway's presence, she turned to him with a casual remark about the promise of the spring. He saw at once that she had achieved an indignant detachment from her thriftless family, and the ardent, almost impatient energy with which she fell to labour was, in itself, a rebuke to the pleasant indolence which had hastened, if it had not brought about, the ruin of the house. Was it some temperamental disgust for the hereditary idleness which had spurred her on to take issue with the worn-out traditions of her ancestors and to place herself among the labouring rather than the leisure class? As she stood there in her freshness and charm, with the short brown curls blown from her forehead, the edge of light shining in her eyes and on her lips, and the rich blood kindling in her vivid face, it seemed to Ordway, looking back at her from the end of his forty years, that he was brought face to face with the spirit of the future rising amid the decaying sentiment of the past.

## CHAPTER VIII

### "Ten Commandment Smith"

When Ordway had disappeared beyond the curve in the avenue, Emily went slowly up the steps, her spade clanking against the stone as she ascended.

"Did he come about the tobacco, Beverly?" she asked.

Beverly rose languidly from the bench, and stood rubbing his hand across his forehead with an exhausted air.

"My head was very painful and he talked so rapidly I could hardly follow him," he replied; "but is it possible, Emily, that you have been digging in the garden?"

"There is nobody else to do it," replied Emily, with an impatient flash in her eyes; "only half the garden has been spaded. If you disapprove so heartily, I wish you 'd produce someone to do the work."

Mrs. Brooke, who had produced nothing in her life except nine children, six of whom had died in infancy, offered at this a feeble and resigned rebuke.

"I am sure you could get Salem," she replied.

"We owe him already three months' wages," returned the girl, "'I am still paying him for last autumn."

"All I ask of you, Emily, is peace," remarked

Beverly, in a gentle voice, as he prepared to enter the house. "Nothing—no amount of brilliant argument can take the place of peace in a family circle. My poor head is almost distracted when you raise your voice."

The three children flocked out of the dining-room and came, with a rush, to fling themselves upon him. They adored him—and there was a live terrapin which they had brought in a box for him to see! In an instant his depression vanished, and he went off, his beautiful face beaming with animation, while the children clung rapturously to his corduroy coat.

"Amelia," said Emily, lowering her voice, "don't you think it would improve Beverly's health if he were to try working for an hour every day in the garden?"

Mrs. Brooke appeared troubled by the suggestion. "If he could only make up his mind to it, I've no doubt it would," she answered, "he has had no exercise since he was obliged to give up his horse. Walking he has always felt to be ungentlemanly."

She spoke in a softly tolerant voice, though she herself drudged day and night in her anxious, tearful, and perfectly ineffectual manner. For twenty years she had toiled patiently without, so far as one could perceive, achieving a single definite result—for by some unfortunate accident of temperament, she was doomed to do badly whatever she undertook to do at all. Yet her intention was so admirable that she appeared forever apologising in her heart for the incompetence of her hands.

Emily placed the spade in the corner of the porch, and desisting from her purpose, went upstairs to wash her hands before going in to dinner. As she ascended the wide, dimly lighted staircase, upon which the sun shone with a greenish light from the gallery above, she stopped twice to wonder why Beverly's visitor had slept in the barn like a tramp only six weeks ago. Before her mirror, a minute later, she put the same question to herself while she braided her hair.

The room was large, cool, high-ceiled, with a great brick fireplace, and windows which looked out on the garden, where purple and white lilacs were blooming beside the gate. On the southern side the ivy had grown through the slats of the old green shutters, until they were held back, crumbling, against the house, and in the space between one of the cedars brushed always, with a whispering sound, against the discoloured panes. In Emily's absence a curious melancholy descended on the old mahogany furniture, the greenish windows and the fireless hearth; but with the opening of the door and the entrance of her vivid youth, there appeared also a light and gracious atmosphere in her surroundings. She remembered the day upon which she had returned after ten years' absence, and how as she opened the closed shutters, the gloom of the place had resisted the passage of the sunshine, retreating stubbornly from the ceiling to the black old furniture and then across the uncarpeted floor to the hall where it still held control. For months after her return it had

seemed to her that the fight was between her spirit and the spirit of the past—between hope and melancholy, between growth and decay. The burden of debt, of poverty, of hopeless impotence had fallen upon her shoulders, and she had struggled under it with impetuous gusts of anger, but with an energy that never faltered. To keep the children fed and clothed, to work the poor farm as far as she was able, to stay clear of any further debts, and to pay off the yearly mortgage with her small income, these were the things which had filled her thoughts and absorbed the gallant fervour of her youth. Her salary at the public school had seemed to Beverly, though he disapproved of her position, to represent the possibility of luxury; and in some loose, vague way he was never able to understand why the same amount could not be made to serve in several opposite directions at the same time.

"That fifty dollars will come in very well, indeed, my dear," he would remark, with cheerfulness, gloating over the unfamiliar sight of the bank notes, "it 's exactly the amount of Wilson's bill which he 's been sending in for the last year, and he refuses to furnish any groceries until the account is settled. Then there 's the roof which must be repaired—it will help us there—then we must all have a supply of shoes, and the wages of the hands are due to-morrow, I overlooked that item."

"But if you pay it all to Wilson," Emily would ask, as a kind of elementary lesson in arithmetic, "how is the money going to buy all the other things?"

"Ah, to be sure," Beverly would respond, as if struck by the lucidity of the idea, "that is the question."

And it was likely to remain the question until the end of Beverly—for he had grown so accustomed to the weight of poverty upon his shoulders that he would probably have felt a sense of loss if it had been suddenly removed. But it was impossible to live in the house with him, to receive his confidences and meet his charming smile and not to entertain a sentiment of affection for him in one's heart. His unfailing courtesy was his defence, though even this at times worked in Emily an unreasonable resentment. He had ruined his family, and she felt that she could have forgiven him more easily if he had ruined it with a less irreproachable demeanour.

After her question he had said nothing further about the tobacco, but a chance meeting with Adam Whaley, as she rode into Tappahannock on the Sunday after Ordway's visit, made clear to her exactly what the purpose of that visit had been.

"It 's a pity Mr. Beverly let his tobacco spoil, particular' arter his wheat turned out to be no account," remarked Adam. "I hope you don't mind my sayin', Miss Em'ly, that Mr. Beverly is about as po' a farmer as he is a first rate gentleman."

"Oh, no, I don't mind in the least, Adam," said Emily. "Do you know," she asked presently,

"any hands that I can get to work the garden this week?"

Whaley shook his head. "They get better paid at the factories," he answered; "an' them that ain't got thar little patch to labour in, usually manage to git a job in town."

Emily was on her old horse—an animal discarded by Mr. Beverly on account of age—and she looked down at his hanging neck with a feeling that was almost one of hopelessness. Beverly, who had never paid his bills, had seldom paid his servants; and of the old slave generation that would work for its master for a song, there were only Micah and poor half-demented Aunt Mehitable now left.

"The trouble with Mr. Beverly," continued Adam, laying his hand on the neck of the old horse, "is that he was born loose-fingered jest as some folks are born loose-moraled. He 's never held on to anything sense he came into the world an' I doubt if he ever will. Why, bless yo' life, even as a leetle boy he never could git a good grip on his fishin' line. It was always a-slidin' an' slippin' into the water."

They had reached Tappahannock in the midst of Adam's philosophic reflection; and as they were about to pass an open field on the edge of the town, Emily pointed to a little crowd which had gathered in the centre of the grass-grown space.

"Is it a Sunday frolic, do you suppose?" she inquired.

"That? Oh no—it 's 'Ten Commandment Smith,' as they call him now. He gives a leetle talk out thar every fine Sunday arternoon."

"A talk? About what?"

"Wall, I ain't much of a listener, Miss, when it comes to that. My soul is willin' an' peart enough, but it 's my hands an' feet that make the trouble. I declar' I 've only got to set down in a pew for 'em to twitch untwel you 'd think I had the Saint Vitus dance. It don't look well to be twitchin' the whole time you are in church, so that 's the reason I 'm obleeged to stay away. As for 'Ten Commandment Smith,' though, he 's got a voice that 's better than the doxology, an' his words jest boom along like cannon."

"And do the people like it?"

"Some, of 'em do, I reckon, bein' as even sermons have thar followers, but thar 're t'others that go jest out of the sperit to be obleegin', an' it seems to them that a man 's got a pretty fair licence to preach who gives away about two-thirds of what he gits a month. Good Lord, he could drum up a respectable sized congregation jest from those whose back mortgages he's helped pay up."

While he spoke Emily had turned her horse's head into the field, and riding slowly toward the group, she stopped again upon discovering that it was composed entirely of men. Then going a little nearer, she drew rein just beyond the outside circle, and paused for a moment with her eyes fixed intently upon the speaker's face.

In the distance a forest, still young in leaf, lent a radiant, springlike background to the field, which rose in soft green swells that changed to golden as they melted gradually into the landscape. Ordway's head was bare, and she saw now that the thick locks upon his forehead were powdered heavily with gray. She could not catch his words, but his voice reached her beyond the crowd; and she found herself presently straining her ears lest she miss the sound which seemed to pass with a peculiar richness into the atmosphere about the speaker. The religious significance of the scene moved her but little—for she came of a race that scorned emotional conversions or any faith, for that matter, which did not confine itself within four well-built walls. Yet, in spite of her convictions, something in the voice whose words she could not distinguish, held her there, as if she were rooted on her old horse to the spot of ground. The unconventional preacher, in his cheap clothes, aroused in her an interest which seemed in some vague way to have its beginning in a mystery that she could not solve. The man was neither a professional revivalist nor a member of the Salvation Army, yet he appeared to hold the attention of his listeners as if either their money or their faith was in his words. And it was no uncultured oratory—"Ten Commandment Smith," for all his rough clothes, his muddy boots and his hardened hands, was beneath all a gentleman, no matter what his work—no matter even what his class. Though she had lived far out of the world in which he had had his place, she felt instinctively that

the voice she heard had been trained to reach another audience than the one before him in the old field. His words might be simple and straight from the heart—doubtless they were—but the voice of the preacher—the vibrant, musical, exquisitely modulated voice—was not merely a personal gift, but the result of generations of culture. The atmosphere of a larger world was around him as he stood there, bare-headed in the sunshine, speaking to a breathless crowd of factory workers as if his heart went out to them in the words he uttered. Perfectly motionless on the grass at his feet his congregation sat in circles with their pathetic dumb eyes fixed on his face.

"What is it about, Adam? Can't you find out?" asked Emily, stirred by an impulsive desire to be one of the attentive group of listeners—to come under the spell of personality which drew its magic circle in the centre of the green field.

Adam crossed the space slowly, and returned after what was to Emily an impatient interval.

"It 's one of his talks on the Ten Commandments—that 's why they gave him his nickname. I did n't stay to find out whether 't was the top or the bottom of 'em, Miss, as I thought you might be in a hurry."

"But they can get that in church. What makes them come out here?"

"Oh, he tells 'em things," said Adam, "about people and places, and how to get on in life. Then he 's al'ays so ready to listen to anybody's troubles

arterward; and he 's taken over Martha Frayley's mortgage—you know she 's the widow of Mike Frayley who was a fireman and lost his life last January in the fire at Bingham's Wall—I reckon, a man 's got a right to talk big when he lives big, too."

"Yes, I suppose he has," said Emily. "Well, I must be going now, so I 'll ride on ahead of you."

Touching the neck of the horse with her bare hand, she passed at a gentle amble into one of the smaller streets of Tappahannock. Her purpose was to call upon one of her pupils who had been absent from school for several days, but upon reaching the house she found that the child, after a slight illness, had recovered sufficiently to be out of doors. This was a relief rather than a disappointment, and mounting again, she started slowly back in the direction of Cedar Hill. A crowd of men, walking in groups along the roadside, made her aware that the gathering in the field had dispersed, and as she rode by she glanced curiously among them in the hope of discovering the face of the speaker. He was walking slightly behind the crowd, listening with an expression of interest, to a man in faded blue overalls, who kept a timid yet determined hold upon his arm. His face, which had appeared grave to Emily when she saw it at Cedar Hill, wore now a look which seemed a mixture of spiritual passion and boyish amusement. He impressed her as both sad and gay, both bitter and sympathetic, and she was struck again by the contrast between his hard mouth and his gentle

eyes. As she met his glance, he bowed without a smile, while he stepped back into the little wayside path among the dusty thistles.

Unconsciously, she had searched his face as Milly Trend had done before her, and like her, she had found there only an impersonal kindliness.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Old and the New

When she reached home she found Beverly, seated before a light blaze in the dining-room, plunged in the condition of pious indolence which constituted his single observance of the Sabbath. To do nothing had always seemed to him in its way as religious as to attend church, and so he sat now perfectly motionless, with the box of dominoes reposing beside his tobacco pouch on the mantel above his head. The room was in great confusion, and the threadbare carpet, ripped up in places, was littered with the broken bindings of old books and children's toys made of birchwood or corncob, upon which Beverly delighted to work during the six secular days of the week. At his left hand the table was already laid for supper, which consisted of a dish of batter-bread, a half bared ham bone and a pot of coffee, from which floated a thin and cheap aroma. A wire shovel for popping corn stood at one side of the big brick fireplace, and on the hearth there was a small pile of half shelled red and yellow ears. Between the two long windows a tall mahogany clock, one of the few pieces left by the collector of old furniture, ticked with a loud, monotonous sound, which seemed to increase in volume with each passage of the hands.

"Did you hear any news, my dear?" inquired Beverly, as Emily entered, for in spite of the fact that he rarely left his fireside, he was an insatiable consumer of small bits of gossip.

"I didn't see anybody," answered Emily in her cheerful voice. "Shall I pour the coffee?"

She went to the head of the table, while her brother, after shelling an ear of corn into the wire shovel, began shaking it slowly over the hickory log.

"I thought you might have heard if Milly Trend had really made up her mind to marry that young tobacco merchant," he observed.

Before Emily could reply the door opened and the three children rushed in, pursued by Aunt Mehitable, who announced that "Miss Meely" had gone to bed with one of her sick headaches and would not come down to supper. The information afforded Beverly some concern, and he rose to leave the room with the intention of going upstairs to his wife's chamber; but observing, as he did so, that the corn was popping finely, he sat down again and devoted his attention to the shovel, which he began to shake more rapidly.

"The terrapin's sick, papa," piped one of the children, a little girl called Lila, as she pulled back her chair with a grating noise and slipped into her seat. "Do you s'pose it would like a little molasses for its supper?"

"Terrapins don't eat molasses," said the boy, whose name was Blair. "They eat flies—I 've seen 'em."

My terrapin shan't eat flies," protested Bella, the second little girl.

"It ain't your terrapin!"

"It is."

"It ain't her terrapin, is it, papa?"

Beverly, having finished his task, unfastened the lid of the shovel with the poker, and suggested that the terrapin might try a little popcorn for a change. As he stood there with his white hair and his flushed face in the red firelight, he made a picture of beautiful and serene domesticity.

"I should n't wonder if he 'd get quite a taste for popcorn if you could once persuade him to try it," he remarked, his mind having wandered whimsically from his wife to the terrapin.

Emily had given the children batter-bread and buttermilk, and she sat now regarding her brother's profile as it was limned boldy in shadow against the quivering flames. It was impossible, she discovered, to survey Beverly's character with softness or his profile with severity.

"Don't you think," she ventured presently, after a wholesome effort to achieve diplomacy, "that you might try to-morrow to spade the seed rows in the garden. Adam can't find anybody, and if the corn is n't dropped this week we 'll probably get none until late in the summer."

"'I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed,'" quoted Beverly, as he drank his coffee. "It would lay me up for a week, Emily, I am surprised that you ask it."

She was surprised herself, the moment after she

had put the question, so hopeless appeared any attempt to bend Beverly to utilitarian purposes.

"Well, the tomatoes which I had counted on for the market will come too late," she said with a barely suppressed impatience in her voice.

"I should n't worry about it if I were you," returned Beverly, "there 's nothing that puts wrinkles in a pretty face so soon as little worries. I remember Uncle Bolingbroke (he used to be my ideal as a little boy) told me once that he had lived to be upward of ninety on the worries from which he had been saved. As a small child I was taken to see him once when he had just come to absolute ruin and had been obliged to sell his horses and his house and even his wife's jewellery for debt. A red flag was flying at the gate, but inside sat Uncle Bolingbroke, drinking port wine and cracking nuts with two of his old cronies. 'Yes, I 've lost everything, my boy,' he cried, 'but it does n't worry me a bit!' At that instant I remember noticing that his forehead was the smoothest I had ever seen."

"But his wife had to take in dressmaking," commented Emily, "and his children grew up without a particle of education."

"Ah, so they did," admitted Beverly, with sadness, "the details had escapd me."

As they had escaped him with equal success all his life, the fact seemed to Emily hardly deserving of comment, and leaving him to his supper, she went upstairs to find Mrs. Brooke prostrate, in a cold room, with her head swathed in camphor ban-

dages. In answer to Emily's inquiries, she moaned plaintively that the pantry shelves needed scouring and that she must get up at daybreak and begin the work. "I 've just remembered lying here that I planned to clean them last week," she said excitedly, "and will you remind me, Emily, as soon as I get up that Beverly's old brown velveteen coat needs a patch at the elbow?"

"Don't think of such things now, Amelia, there's plenty of time. You are shivering all over—I 'll start the fire in a moment. It has turned quite cool again."

"But I wanted to save the pine knots until Beverly came up," sighed Mrs. Brooke, "he is so fond of them."

Without replying to her nervous protest, Emily knelt on the hearth and kindled a blaze which leaped rosily over the knots of resinous pine. Of the two family failings with which she was obliged to contend, she had long ago decided that Beverly's selfishness was less harmful in its results than Amelia's self-sacrifice. Inordinate at all times, it waxed positively violent during her severe attacks of headache, and between two spasms of pain her feverish imagination conjured up dozens of small self-denials which served to increase her discomfort while they conferred no possible benefit upon either her husband or her children. Her temperament had fitted her for immolation; but the character of the age in which she lived had compelled her to embrace a domestic rather than a religious martyrdom. The rack would have been to her morally a bed of roses, and some exalted grace belonging to the high destiny

that she had missed was visible at times in her faded gray eyes and impassive features.

"Mehitable brought me an egg," she groaned presently, growing more comfortable in spite of her resolve, as the rosy fire-light penetrated into the chill gloom where she lay, "but I sent it down to Blair—I heard him coughing."

"He did n't want it. There was plenty of batter-bread."

"Yes, but the poor boy is fond of eggs and he so seldom has one. It is very sad. Emily, have you noticed how inert and lifeless Mr. Brooke has grown?"

"It 's nothing new, Amelia, he has always been that way. Can't you sleep now?"

"Oh, but if you could have seen him when we became engaged, Emily—such life! such spirits! I remember the first time I dined at your father's—that was before Beverly's mother died, so, of course, *your* mother was n't even thought of in the family. I suppose second marriages are quite proper, since the Lord permits them, but they always seem to me like trying to sing the same hymn over again with equal fervour. Well, I was going to say that when your father asked me what part of the fowl I preferred and I answered 'dark meat, sir,' he fairly rapped the table in his delight: 'Oh, Amelia, what a capital wife you 'll make for Beverly,' he cried, 'if you will only continue to prefer dark meat!' "

She stopped breathlessly, lay silent for a moment, and then began to moan softly with pain. Emily swept the hearth, and after putting on a fresh log,

went out, closing the door after her. There was no light in her room, but she reflected with a kind of desperation that there was no Beverly and no Amelia. The weight of the family had left her bruised and helpless, yet she knew that she must go downstairs again, remove the supper things, and send the three resisting children off to bed. She was quite equal to the task she had undertaken, yet there were moments when, because of her youth and her vitality, she found it harder to control her temper than to accomplish her work.

At ten o'clock, when she had coaxed the children to sleep, and persuaded Amelia to drink a cup of gruel, she came to her room again and began to undress slowly by the full moonlight which streamed through the window. Outside, beyond the lilac bushes, she could see the tangled garden, with the dried stubble of last year's corn protruding from the unspaded rows. This was the last sight upon which her eyes turned before she climbed into the high tester bed and fell into the prompt and untroubled sleep of youth.

Awaking at six o'clock she went again to the window, and at the first glance it seemed to her that she must have slipped back into some orderly and quiet dream—for the corn rows which had presented a blighted aspect under the moonlight were now spaded and harrowed into furrows ready for planting. The suggestion that Beverly had prepared a surprise for her occurred first to her mind, but she dismissed this the next instant and thought of Adam, Micah,

even of the demented Aunt Mehitable. The memory of the fairy godmother in the story book brought a laugh to her lips, and as she dressed herself and ran downstairs to the garden gate, she half expected to see the pumpkin chariot disappearing down the weed-grown path and over the fallen fence. The lilac blossoms shed a delicious perfume into her face, and leaning against the rotting posts of the gate, she looked with mingled delight and wonder upon the freshly turned earth, which flushed faintly pink in the sunshine. A heavy dew lay over the landscape and as the sun rose slowly higher the mist was drawn back from the green fields like a sheet of gauze that is gathered up.

"Beverly? Micah? Mehitable?" each name was a question she put to herself, and after each she answered decisively, "No, it is impossible." Micah, who appeared at the moment, doting, half blind and wholly rheumatic, shook his aged head helplessly in response to her eager inquiries. There was clearly no help to be had from him except the bewildered assistance he rendered in the afternoon by following on her footsteps with a split basket while she dropped the grains of corn into the opened furrows. His help in this case even was hardly more than a hindrance, for twice in his slow progress he stumbled and fell over a trailing brier in the path, and Emily was obliged to stop her work and gather up the grain which he had scattered.

"Dese yer ole briers is des a-layin' out fur you," he muttered as he sat on the ground rubbing the

variegated patch on his rheumatic knee. When the planting was over he went grumbling back to his cabin, while Emily walked slowly up and down the garden path and dreamed of the vegetables which would ripen for the market. In the midst of her business calculations she remembered the little congregation in the green field on Sunday afternoon and the look of generous enthusiasm in the face of the man who passed her in the road. Why had she thought of him? she wondered idly, and why should that group of listeners gathered out of doors in the faint sunshine awake in her a sentiment which was associated with some religious emotion of which she had been half unconscious?

The next night she awoke from a profound sleep with the same memory in her mind, and turning on her pillow, lay wide awake in the moonlight, which brought with it a faint spring chill from the dew outside. On the ivy the light shone almost like dawn, and as she could not fall asleep again, she rose presently, and slipping into her flannel dressing-gown, crossed to the window and looked out upon the shining fields, the garden and the blossoming lilacs at the gate. The shadow of the lilacs lay thick and black along the garden walk, and her eyes were resting upon them, when it seemed to her that a portion of the darkness detached itself and melted out into the moonlight. At first she perceived only the moving shadow; then gradually a figure was outlined on the bare rows of the garden, and as her eyes grew accustomed to the light, she saw that the

figure had assumed a human shape, though it was still followed so closely by its semblance upon the ground that it was impossible at a distance to distinguish the living worker from his airy double. Yet she realised instantly that her mysterious gardener was at work before her eyes, and hastening into her clothes, she caught up her cape from a chair, and started toward the door with an impulsive determination to discover his identity. With her hand on the knob, she hesitated and stopped, full of perplexity, upon the threshold. Since he had wished to remain undiscovered was it fair, she questioned, to thrust recognition upon his kindness? On the other hand was it not more than unfair—was it not positively ungrateful—to allow his work to pass without any sign of acceptance or appreciation? In the chill white moonlight outside she could see the pointed tops of the cedars rising like silver spires. As the boughs moved the wind entered, bringing mingled odours of cedar berries, lilacs and freshly turned soil. For an instant longer her hesitation lasted; then throwing aside her cape, she undressed quickly, without glancing again down into the garden. When she fell asleep now it was to dream of the shadowy gardener spading in the moonlight among the lilacs.

## CHAPTER X

### His Neighbour's Garden

In his nightly work in the Brookes' garden, Ordway was prompted at first by a mere boyish impulse to repay people whose bread he had eaten and in whose straw he had slept. But at the end of the first hour's labour the beauty of the moonlight wrought its spell upon him, and he felt that the fragrance of the lilacs went like strong wine to his head. So the next night he borrowed Mrs. Twine's spade again and went back for the pure pleasure of the exercise; and the end of the week found him still digging among the last year's plants in the loamy beds. By spading less than two hours a night, he had turned the soil of half the garden before Sunday put a stop to his work.

On his last visit, he paused at the full of the moon, and stood looking almost with sadness at the blossoming lilacs and the overgrown path powdered with wild flowers which had strayed in through the broken fence. For the hours he had spent there the place had given him back his freedom and his strength and even a reminiscent sentiment of his youth. While he worked Lydia had been only a little farther off in the beauty of the moonlight, and he had felt her presence with a spiritual sense which was keener than the sense of touch.

As he drew his spade for the last time from the earth, he straightened himself, and standing erect, faced the cool wind which tossed the hair back from his heated forehead. At the moment he was content with the moonlight and the lilacs and the wind that blew over the spring fields, and it seemed easy enough to let the future rest with the past in the hands of God. Swinging the spade at his side, he lowered his eyes and moved a step toward the open gate. Then he stopped short, for he saw that Emily Brooke was standing there between the old posts under the purple and white lilacs.

"It seemed too ungrateful to accept such a service and not even to say 'thank you,'" she remarked gravely. There was a drowsy sound in her voice; her lids hung heavily like a child's over her brown eyes, and her hair was flattened into little curls on one side by the pressure of the pillow.

"It has been a pleasure to me," he answered, "so I deserve no thanks for doing the thing that I enjoyed."

Drawing nearer he stood before her with the spade on his shoulder and his head uncovered. The smell of the earth hung about him, and even in the moonlight she could see that his blue eyes looked almost gay. She felt all at once that he was younger, larger, more masculine than she had at first believed.

"And yet it is work," she said in her voice of cheerful authority, "and sorely needed work at that. I can thank you even though I cannot understand why you have done it."

"Let 's put it down to my passion to improve things," he responded with a whimsical gravity, "don't you think the garden as I first saw it justified that explanation of my behaviour?"

"The explanation, yes—but not you," she answered, smiling.

"Then let my work justify itself. I 've made a neat job of it, have n't I?"

"It 's more than neat, it 's positively ornamental," she replied, "but even your success does n't explain your motive."

"Well, the truth is—if you will have it—I needed exercise."

"You might have walked."

"That does n't reach the shoulders—there 's the trouble."

She laughed with an easy friendliness which struck him as belonging to her gallant manner.

"Oh, I assure you I shan't insist upon a reason, I 'm too much obliged to you," she returned, coming inside the gate. "Indeed, I 'm too good a farmer, I believe, to insist upon a reason anyway. Providence disposes and I accept with thanks. I may wish, though, that the coloured population shared your leaning toward the spade. By the way, I see it is n't mine. It looks too shiny."

"I borrowed it from Mrs. Twine, and it is my suspicion that she scrubs it every night."

"In that case I wonder that she lets it go out to other people's gardens."

"She does n't usually," he laughed as he spoke,

"but you see I am a very useful person to Mrs. Twine. She talks at her husband by way of me."

"Oh, I see," said Emily. "Well, I 'm much obliged to her."

"You need n't be. She had n't the remotest idea where it went."

Her merriment, joining with his, brought them suddenly together in a feeling of good fellowship.

"So you don't like divided thanks," she commented gaily.

"Not when they are undeserved," he answered, "as they are in this case."

For a moment she was silent; then going slowly back to the gate, she turned there and looked at him wonderingly, he thought.

"After all, it must have been a good wind that blew you to Tappahannock," she observed.

Her friendliness—which impressed him as that of a creature who had met no rebuffs or disappointments from human nature, made an impetuous, almost childlike, appeal to his confidence.

"Do you remember the night I slept in your barn?" he asked suddenly.

She bent down to pick up a broken spray of lilac.

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, I was at the parting of the ways that night —I was beaten down, desperate, hopeless. Something in your kindness and—yes, and in your courage, too, put new life into me, and the next morning I turned back to Tappahannock. But for you I should still have followed the road."

"It is more likely to have been the cup of coffee," she said in her frank, almost boyish way.

"There 's something in that, of course," he answered quietly. "I *was* hungry, God knows, but I was more than hungry, I was hurt. It was all my fault, you understand—I had made an awful mess of things, and I had to begin again low down—at the very bottom." It was in his mind to tell her the truth then, from the moment of his fall to the day that he had returned to Tappahannock; but he was schooling himself hard to resist the sudden impulses which had wrecked his life, so checking his words with an effort, he lowered the spade from his shoulder, and leaning upon the handle, stood waiting for her to speak.

"Then you began again at Baxter's warehouse the morning afterward?" she asked.

"I had gone wrong from the very base of things, you see," he answered.

"And you are making a new foundation now?"

"I am trying to. They 're decent enough folk in Tappahannock, are n't they?" he added cheerfully.

"Perhaps they are," she responded, a little wistfully, "but I should like to have a glimpse of the world outside. I should like most, I think, to see New York."

"New York?" he repeated blankly, "you 've never been there?"

"I? Oh, no, I 've never been out of Virginia, except when I taught school once in Georgia."

The simple dignity with which she spoke caused him to look at her suddenly as if he had taken her in

for the first time. Perfectly unabashed by her disclosure, she stood before him as calmly as she would have stood, he felt, had he possessed a thousand amazed pairs of eyes. Her confidence belonged less to personal experience, he understood now, than to some inherited ideal of manner—of social values; and it seemed to him at the moment that there was a breadth, a richness in her aspect which was like the atmosphere of rare old libraries.

"You have, I dare say, read a great many books," he remarked.

"A great many—oh, yes, we kept our books almost to the last. We still have the entire south wall in the library—the English classics are there."

"I imagined so," he answered, and as he looked at her he realised that the world she lived in was not the narrow, provincial world of Tappahannock, with its dusty warehouses, its tobacco scented streets, its red clay roads.

She had turned from the gate, but before moving away she looked back and bowed to him with her gracious Southern courtesy, as she had done that first night in the barn.

"Good-night. I cannot thank you enough," she said.

"Good-night. I am only paying my debt," he answered.

As he spoke she entered the house, and with the spade on his shoulder he passed down the avenue and struck out vigorously upon the road to Tappahannock.

When he came down to breakfast some hours later, Mrs. Twine informed him that a small boy had come at daybreak with a message to him from Bullfinch's Hollow.

"Of course it ain't any of my business, suh," she continued impressively, "but if I were you I would n't pay any attention to Kit Berry or his messages. Viciousness is jest as ketchin' as disease, that 's what I say, an' you can't go steppin' aroun' careless whar it is in the air an' expect to git away with a whole morality. 'T ain't as if you were a female, either, for if I do say it who should not, they don't seem to be so thin-skinned whar temptation is concerned. 'T was only two weeks ago last Saturday when I went to drag Bill away from that thar low lived saloon (the very same you broke into through the window, suh) that Timmas Kelly had the imperence to say to me, 'This is no place for respectable women, Mrs. Twine.' 'An, indeed, I 'd like to know, Mr. Kelly,' said I to him, 'if it 's too great a strain for the women, how the virtue of the men have stood it? For what a woman can't resist, I reckon, it 's jest as well for a man not to be tempted with.' He shet up then tight as a keg—I 'd wish you 'd have seen him."

"In his place I should probably have done the same," admitted Ordway, as he took his coffee from her hands. He was upon excellent terms with Mrs. Twine, with the children, and even with the disreputable Bill.

"Wall, I 've done a lot o' promisin', like other folks," pursued Mrs. Twine, turning from the table to pick

up a pair of Canty's little breeches into which she was busily inserting a patch, "an' like them, I reckon, I was mostly lyin' when I did it. Thar's a good deal said at the weddin' about 'love' and 'honour' and 'obey,' but for all the slick talk of the parson, experience has taught me that sich things are feelin's an' not whalebones. Now if thar 's a woman on this earth that could manage to love, honour and obey Bill Twine, I 'd jest like for her to step right up an' show her face, for she 's a bigger fool than I 'd have thought even a female could boast of bein'. As for me, suh, a man's a man same as a horse is a horse, an' if I 'm goin' to set about honourin' any animal on o'count of its size I reckon I'd as soon turn roun' an' honour a whale."

"But you must n't judge us all by our friend Bill," remarked Ordway, picking up the youngest child with a laugh, "remember his weakness, and be charitable to the rest of us."

Mrs. Twine spread the pair of little breeches upon her knee and slapped them into shape as energetically as if they had contained the person of their infant wearer.

"As for that, suh," she rejoined, "so far as I can see one man differs from another only in the set of his breeches—for the best an' the worst of 'em are made of the same stuff, an' underneath thar skin they're all pure natur. I've had three of 'em for better or for worse, an' I reckon that's as many specimens as you generally jedge things by in a museum. A weak woman would have kept a widow

after my marriage with Bob Cotton, the brother of William, suh—but I ain't weak, that's one thing can be said for me—so when I saw my opportunity in the person of Mike Frazier, I up an' said: 'Wall, thar 's this much to be said for marriage—whether you do or whether you don't you 'll be sure to regret it, an' the regret for things you have done ain't quite so forlorn an' impty headed a feelin' as the regret for things you have n't.' Then I married him, an' when he died an' Bill came along I married him, too. Sech is my determination when I 've once made up my mind, that if Bill died I 'd most likely begin to look out for another. But if I do, suh, I tell you now that I 'd try to start the next with a little pure despisin'—for thar 's got to come a change in marriage one way or another, that 's natur, an' I reckon it 's as well to have it change for the better instead of the worst."

A knock at the door interrupted her, and when she had answered it, she looked back over her shoulder to tell Ordway that Mr. Banks had stopped by to walk downtown with him.

With a whispered promise to return with a pocketfull of lemon drops, Ordway slipped the child from his knee, and hurriedly picking up his hat, went out to join Banks upon the front steps. Since the day upon which the two men had met at a tobacco auction Banks had attached himself to Ordway with a devotion not unlike that of a faithful dog. At his first meeting he had confided to the older man the story of his youthful struggles, and the following day he

had unburdened himself with rapture of his passion for Milly.

"I 've just had breakfast with the Trends," he said, "so I thought I might as well join you on your way down. Mighty little doing in tobacco now, is n't there?"

"Well, I 'm pretty busy with the accounts," responded Ordway. "By the way, Banks, I 've had a message from Bullfinch's Hollow. Kit Berry wants me to come over."

"I like his brass. Why can't he come to you?"

"He 's sick it seems, so I thought I 'd go down there some time in the afternoon."

They had reached Trend's gate as he spoke, to find Milly herself standing there in her highest colour and her brightest ribbon. As Banks came up with her, he introduced Ordway, who would have passed on had not Milly held out her hand.

"Father was just saying how much he should like to meet you, Mr. Smith," she remarked, hoping while she uttered the words that she would remember to instruct Jasper Trend to live up to them when the opportunity afforded. "Perhaps you will come in to supper with us to-night? Mr. Banks will be here."

"Thank you," said Ordway with the boyish smile which had softened the heart of Mrs. Twine, "but I was just telling Banks I had to go over to Bullfinch's Hollow late in the afternoon."

"Somebody's sick there, you know," explained Banks in reply to Milly's look of bewilderment.

"He 's the greatest fellow alive for missionarying to sick people."

"Oh, you see it 's easier to hit a man when he 's down," commented Ordway, drily. He was looking earnestly at Milly Trend, who grew prettier and pinker beneath his gaze, yet at the moment he was only wondering if Alice's bright blue eyes could be as lovely as the softer ones of the girl before him.

As they went down the hill a moment afterward Banks asked his companion, a little reproachfully, why he had refused the invitation to supper.

"After all I 've told you about Milly," he concluded, "I hoped you 'd want to meet her when you got the chance."

Ordway glanced down at his clothes. "My dear Banks, I 'm a working man, and to tell the truth I could n't manufacture an appearance—that 's the best excuse I have."

"All the same I wish you 'd go. Milly would n't care."

"Milly might n't, but you would have blushed for me. I could n't have supported a comparison with your turtle-dove."

Banks reddened hotly, while he put his hand to his cravat with a conscious laugh.

"Oh, you don't need turtle-doves and things," he answered, "there 's something about you—I don't know what it is—that takes the place of them."

"The place of diamond turtle-doves and violet stockings?" laughed Ordway with good-humoured raillery.

"You would n't be a bit better looking if you wore them—Milly says so."

"I 'm much obliged to Milly and on the whole I 'm inclined to think she 's right. Do you know," he added, "I 'm not quite sure that you are improved by them yourself, except for the innocent enjoyment they afford you."

"But I 'm such a common looking chap," said Banks, "I need an air."

"My dear fellow," returned Ordway, while his look went like sunshine to the other's heart, "if you want to know what you are—well, you 're a downright trump!"

He stopped before the brick archway of Baxter's warehouse, and an instant later, Banks, looking after him as he turned away, vowed in the luminous simplicity of his soul that if the chance ever came to him he "would go to hell and back again for the sake of Smith."

## CHAPTER XI

### Bullfinch's Hollow

At five o'clock Ordway followed the uneven board walk to the end of the main street, and then turning into a little footpath which skirted the railroad track, he came presently to the abandoned field known in Tappahannock as Bullfinch's Hollow. Beyond a disorderly row of negro hovels, he found a small frame cottage, which he recognised as the house to which he had brought Kit Berry on the night when he had dragged him bodily from Kelly's saloon. In response to his knock the door was opened by the same weeping woman—a small withered person, with snapping black eyes and sparse gray hair brushed fiercely against her scalp, where it clung so closely that it outlined the bones beneath. At sight of Ordway a smile curved her sunken mouth; and she led the way through the kitchen to the door of a dimly lighted room at the back, where a boy of eighteen years tossed deliriously on a pallet in one corner. It was poverty in its direst, its most abject, results, Ordway saw at once as his eyes travelled around the smoke stained, unplastered walls and rested upon the few sticks of furniture and the scant remains of a meal on the kitchen table. Then he looked into Mrs. Berry's face and saw that she

must have lived once amid surroundings far less wretched than these.

"Kit was taken bad with fever three days ago," she said, "an' the doctor told me this mornin' that the po' boy 's in for a long spell of typhoid. He 's clean out of his head most of the time, but whenever he comes to himself he begs and prays me to send for you. Something 's on his mind, but I can't make out what it is."

"May I see him now?" asked Ordway.

"I think he 's wanderin', but I'll find out in a minute."

She went to the pallet and bending over the young man, whispered a few words in his ear, while her knotted hand stroked back the hair from his forehead. As Ordway's eyes rested on her thin shoulders under the ragged, half soiled calico dress she wore, he forgot the son in the presence of the older and more poignant tragedy of the mother's life. Yet all that he knew of her history was that she had married a drunkard and had brought a second drunkard into the world.

"He wants to speak to you, sir—he 's come to," she said, returning to the doorway, and fixing her small black eyes upon Ordway's face. "You are the gentleman, ain't you, who got him to sign the pledge?"

Ordway nodded. "Did he keep it?"

Her sharp eyes filled with tears.

"He has n't touched a drop for going on six weeks, sir, but he had n't the strength to hold up without it, so the fever came on and wore him down." Swallow-

ing a sob with a gulp, she wiped her eyes fiercely on the back of her hand. "He ain't much to look at now," she finished, divided between her present grief and her reminiscent pride, "but, oh, Mr. Smith, if you could have seen him as a baby! When he was a week old he was far and away the prettiest thing you ever laid your eyes on—not red, sir, like other children, but white as milk, with dimples at his knees and elbows. I 've still got some of his little things—a dress he wore and a pair of knitted shoes—and it 's them that make me cry, sir. I ain't grievin' for the po' boy in there that 's drunk himself to death, but for that baby that used to be."

Still crying softly, she slunk out into the kitchen, while Ordway, crossing to the bed, stood looking down upon the dissipated features of the boy who lay there, with his matted hair tossed over his flushed forehead.

"I 'm sorry to see you down, Kit. Can I do anything to help you?" he asked.

Kit opened his eyes with a start of recognition, and reaching out, gripped Ordway's wrist with his burning hand, while he threw off the ragged patchwork quilt upon the bed.

"I 've something on my mind, and I want to get it off," he answered. "When it 's once off I 'll be better and get back my wits."

"Then get it off. I 'm waiting."

"Do you remember the night in the bar-room?" demanded the boy in a whisper, "the time you came in through the window and took me home?"

"Go on," said Ordway.

"Well, I 'd walked up the street behind you that afternoon when you left Baxter's, and I got drunk that night on a dollar I stole from you."

"But I didn't speak to you. I didn't even see you."

"Of course you didn't. If you had I couldn't have stolen it, but Baxter had just paid you and when you put your hand into your pocket to get out something, a dollar bill dropped on the walk."

"Go on."

"I picked it up and got drunk on it, there's nothing else. It was a pretty hard drunk, but before I got through you came in and dragged me home. Twenty cents were left in my pockets. Mother found the money and bought a fish for breakfast.

"Well, I did that much good at least," observed Ordway with a smile, "have you finished, Kit?"

"It 's been on my mind," repeated Kit deliriously, "and I wanted to get it off."

"It 's off now, my boy," said Ordway, picking up the ragged quilt from the floor and laying it across the other's feet, "and on the whole I 'm glad you told me. You 've done the straight thing, Kit, and I am proud of you."

"Proud of me?" repeated Kit, and fell to crying like a baby.

In a minute he grew delirious again, and Ordway, after bathing the boy's face and hands from a basin of water on a chair at the bedside, went into the kitchen in search of Mrs. Berry, whom he found weeping over a pair of baby's knitted shoes. The pathos of her grief bordered so closely upon the

ridiculous that while he watched her he forced back the laugh upon his lips.

"Kit is worse again," he said. "Do you give him any medicine?"

Mrs. Berry struggled with difficulty to her feet, while her sobs changed into a low whimpering sound.

"Did you sit up with him last night?" asked Ordway, following her to the door.

"I 've been up for three nights, sir. He has to have his face and hands bathed every hour."

"What about medicine and food?"

"The doctor gives him his medicine free, every drop of it, an' they let me have a can of milk every day from Cedar Hill. I used to live there as a girl, you know, my father was overseer in old Mr. Brooke's time—before he married Miss Emily's mother——"

Ordway cut short her reminiscences.

"Well, you must sleep to-night," he said authoritatively, "I'll come back in an hour and sit up with Kit. Where is your room?"

She pointed to a rickety flight of stairs which led to the attic above.

"Kit slept up there until he was taken ill," she answered. "He 's been a hard son to me, sir, as his father was a hard husband because of drink, but to save the life of me I can't forgit how good he used to be when he warn't more 'n a week old. Never fretted or got into tempers like other babies——"

Again Ordway broke in drily upon her wandering recollections.

"Now I 'll go for an hour," he said abruptly, "and

by the way, have you had supper or shall I bring you some groceries when I come?"

"There was a little milk left in the pitcher and I had a piece of cornbread, but—oh, Mr. Smith," her small black eyes snapped fiercely into his, "there are times when my mouth waters for a cup of coffee jest as po' Kit's does for whiskey."

"Then put the kettle on," returned Ordway, smiling, as he left the room.

It was past sunset when he returned, and he found Kit sleeping quietly under the effect of the medicine the doctor had just given him. Mrs. Berry had recovered sufficient spirit, not only to put the kettle on the stove, but to draw the kitchen table into the square of faint light which entered over the doorstep. The preparations for her supper had been made, he saw, with evident eagerness, and as he placed his packages upon the table, she fell upon them with an excited, childish curiosity. A few moments later the aroma of boiling coffee floated past him where he sat on the doorstep smoking his last pipe before going into the sick-room for the night. Turning presently he watched the old woman in amazement while she sat smacking her thin lips and jerking her shrivelled little hands over her fried bacon; and as he looked into her ecstatic face, he realised something of the intensity which enters into the scant enjoyments of the poor. The memory of his night in the Brookes' barn returned to him with the aroma of the coffee, and he understood for the first time that it is possible to associate a rapture with meat

and drink. Then, in spite of his resolve to keep his face turned toward his future, he found himself contrasting the squalid shanty at his back with the luxurious surroundings amid which he had last watched all night by a sick-bed. He could see the rich amber-coloured curtains, the bowls of violets on the inlaid table between the open windows, the exquisite embroidered coverlet upon the bed, and the long pale braid of Lydia's hair lying across the lace ruffles upon her nightgown. Before his eyes was the sunken field filled with Negro hovels and refuse heaps in which lean dogs prowled snarling in search of bones; but his inward vision dwelt, in a luminous mist, on the bright room, scented with violets, where Lydia had slept with her baby cradled within her arm. He could see her arm still under the falling lace, round and lovely, with delicate blue veins showing beneath the inside curve.

In the midst of his radiant memory the acrid voice of Mrs. Berry broke with a shock, and turning quickly he found that his dream took instant flight before the aggressive actuality which she presented.

"I declare I believe I 'd clean forgot how good things tasted," she remarked in the cheerful tones of one who is full again after having been empty.

Picking up a chip from the ground, Ordway began scraping carelessly at the red clay on his boots. "It smells rather nice anyway," he rejoined good-humouredly, and rising from the doorstep, he crossed the kitchen and sat down in the sagging split-bottomed chair beside the pallet.

At sunrise he left Kit, sleeping peacefully after a delirious night, and going out of doors for a breath of fresh air, stood looking wearily on the dismal prospect of Bullfinch's Hollow. The disorderly road, the dried herbage of the field, the Negro hovels, with pig pens for backyards, and the refuse heaps piled with tin cans, old rags and vegetable rinds, appeared to him now to possess a sordid horror which had escaped him under the merciful obscurity of the twilight. Even the sun, he thought, looked lean and shrunken, as it rose over the slovenly landscape.

With the first long breath he drew there was only dejection in his mental outlook; then he remembered the enraptured face of Mrs. Berry as she poured out her coffee, and he told himself that there were pleasures hardy enough to thrive and expand even in the atmosphere of Bullfinch's Hollow.

As there was no wood in the kitchen, he shouldered an old axe which he found leaning in one corner, and going to a wood-pile beyond the doorstep, split up the single rotting log lying upon a heap of mould. Returning with his armful of wood, he knelt on the hearth and attempted to kindle a blaze before the old woman should make her appearance from the attic. The sticks had just caught fire, when a shadow falling over him from the open door caused him to start suddenly to his feet.

"I beg your pardon," said a voice, "but I've brought some milk for Mrs. Berry."

At the words his face reddened as if from shame, and drawing himself to his full height, he stood,

embarrassed and silent, in the centre of the room, while Emily Brooke crossed the floor and placed the can of milk she had brought upon the table.

"I did n't mean to interrupt you," she added cheerfully, "but there was no one else to come, so I had to ride over before breakfast. Is Kit better?"

"Yes," said Ordway, and to his annoyance he felt himself flush painfully at the sound of his own voice.

"You spent last night with him?" she inquired in her energetic tones.

"Yes."

As he stood there in his cheap clothes, with his dishevelled hair and his unwashed hands, she was struck by some distinction of personality, before which these surface roughnesses appeared as mere incidental things. Was it in his spare, weather-beaten face? Or was it in the peculiar contrast between his gray hair and his young blue eyes? Then her gaze fell on his badly made working clothes, worn threadbare in places, on his clean striped shirt, frayed slightly at the collar and cuffs, on his broken finger-nails, and on the red clay still adhering to his country boots.

"I wonder why you do these things?" she asked so softly that the words hardly reached him. "I wonder why?"

Though she had expected no response to her question, to her surprise he answered almost impulsively as he stooped to pick up a bit of charred wood from the floor.

"Well, one must fill one's life, you know," he said.

"I tried the other thing once but it did n't count—it was hardly better than this, when all is said."

"What 'other thing' do you mean?"

"When I spoke I was thinking of what people have got to call 'pleasure,'" he responded, "getting what one wants in life, or trying to get it and failing in the end."

"And did you fail?" she asked, with a simplicity which saved the blunt directness of the question.

He laughed. "Do you think if I had succeeded, I 'd be splitting wood in Bullfinch's Hollow?"

"And you care nothing for Kit Berry?"

"Oh, I like him—he 's an under dog."

"Then you are for the under dog, right or wrong, as I am?" she responded with a radiant look.

"Well, I don't know about that," he answered, "but I have at least a fellow feeling for him. I 'm an under dog myself, you see."

"But you won't stay one long?"

"That 's the danger. When I come out on top I 'll doubtless stop splitting wood and do something worse."

"I don't believe it," she rejoined decisively. "You have never had a chance at the real thing before."

"You 're right there," he admitted, "I had never seen the real thing in my life until I came to Tappahannock."

"Do you mind telling me," she asked, after an instant's hesitation, "why you came to Tappahannock? I can't understand why anyone should ever come here."

"I don't know about the others, but I came because my road led here. I followed my road."

"Not knowing where it would end?"

He laughed again. "Not *caring* where it would end."

Her charming boyish smile rippled across her lips.

"It is n't necessary that I should understand to be glad that you kept straight on," she said.

"But the end is n't yet," he replied, with a gaiety beneath which she saw the seriousness in his face. "It may lead me off again."

"To a better place I hope."

"Well, I suppose that would be easy to find," he admitted, as he glanced beyond the doorway, "but I like Tappahannock. It has taken me in, you know, and there's human nature even in Bullfinch's Hollow."

"Oh, I suppose it's hideous," she remarked, following his look in the direction of the town, "but I can't judge. I've seen so little else, you know—and yet my City Beautiful is laid out in my mind."

"Then you carry it with you, and that is best."

As she was about to answer the door creaked above them and Mrs. Berry came down the short flight of steps, hastily fastening her calico dress as she descended.

"Well, I declare, who 'd have thought to see you at this hour, Miss Emily," she exclaimed effusively.

"I thought you might need the milk early," replied the girl, "and as Micah had an attack of rheumatism I brought it over on horseback."

While the old woman emptied the contents of the

can into a cracked china pitcher, Emily held out her hand to Ordway with an impulsive gesture.

"We shall have a flourishing kitchen garden," she said, "thanks to you."

Then taking the empty can from Mrs. Berry, she crossed the threshold, and remounted from the doorstep.

## CHAPTER XII

### A String of Coral

As Emily rode slowly up from Bullfinch's Hollow, it seemed to her that the abandoned fields had borrowed an aspect which was almost one of sentiment. In the golden light of the sunrise even the Negro hovels, the refuse heaps and the dead thistles by the roadside, were transfigured until they appeared to lose their ordinary daytime ugliness; and the same golden light was shining inwardly on the swift impressions which crowded her thoughts. This strange inner illumination surrounded, she discovered now, each common fact which presented itself to her mind, and though the outward form of life was not changed, her mental vision had become suddenly enraptured. She did not stop to ask herself why the familiar events of every day appear so full of vivid interests—why the external objects at which she looked swam before her gaze in an atmosphere that was like a rainbow mist? It was sufficient to be alive to the finger tips, and to realise that everything in the great universe was alive around one—the air, the sky, the thistles along the roadside and the dust blowing before the wind, all moved, she felt, in harmony with the elemental pulse of life. On that morning she entered for the first time into the secret of immortality.

And yet—was it only the early morning hour? she asked herself, as she rode back between the stretches of dried broomsedge. Or was it, she questioned a moment later, the natural gratification she had felt in a charity so generous, so unassuming as that of the man she had seen at Mrs. Berry's?

"It 's a pity he is n't a gentleman and that his clothes are so rough," she thought, and blushed the next instant with shame because she was "only a wretched snob."

"Whatever his class he *is* a gentleman," she began again, "and he would be quite—even very—good-looking if his face were not so drawn and thin. What strange eyes he has—they are as blue as Blair's and as young. No, he is n't exactly good-looking—not in Beverly's way, at least—but I should know his face again if I did n't see it for twenty years. It 's odd that there are people one hardly knows whom one never forgets."

Her bare hands were on Major's neck, and as she looked at them a displeased frown gathered her brows. She wondered why she had never noticed before that they were ugly and unwomanly, and it occurred to her that Aunt Mehitable had once told her that "ole Miss" washed her hands in buttermilk to keep them soft and white. "They 're almost as rough as Mr. Smith's," she thought, "perhaps he noticed them." The idea worried her for a minute, for she hated, she told herself, that people should not think her "nice"—but the golden light was still flooding her thoughts and these trivial disturbances scattered

almost before they had managed to take shape. Nothing worried her long to-day, and as she dismounted at the steps, and ran hurriedly into the dining-room, she remembered Beverly and Amelia with an affection which she had not felt for years. It was as if the mere external friction of personalities had dissolved before the fundamental relation of soul to soul; even poor half-demented Aunt Mehitable wore in her eyes, at the minute, an immortal aspect.

A little later when she rode in to the public school at Tappahannock, she discovered that the golden light irradiated even the questions in geography and arithmetic upon the blackboard; and coming out again, she found that it lay like sunshine on the newly turned vegetable rows in the garden. That afternoon for the first time she planted in a discarded pair of buckskin gloves, and as soon as her work was over, she went upstairs to her bedroom, and regarded herself wistfully by the light from a branched candlestick which she held against the old greenish mirror. Her forehead was too high, she admitted regretfully, her mouth was too wide, her skin certainly was too brown. The blue cotton dress she wore appeared to her suddenly common and old-fashioned, and she began looking eagerly through her limited wardrobe in the hopeless quest for a gown that was softened by so much as a fall of lace about the throat. Then remembering the few precious trinkets saved from the bartered heirlooms of her dead mother, she got out the old black leather jewel case and went patiently over the family possessions. Among the

mourning brooches and hair bracelets that the box contained there was a necklace of rare pink coral, which she had meant to give Bella upon her birthday—but as her gaze was arrested now by the cheerful colour, she sat for a moment wondering if she might not honestly keep the beads for her own. Still undecided she went to the bureau again and fastened the string of coral around her firm brown throat.

"I may wear it for a week or two at least," she thought. "Why not?" It seemed to her foolish, almost unfeminine that she had never cared or thought about her clothes until to-day. "I 've gone just like a boy—I ought to be ashamed to show my hands," she said; and at the same instant she was conscious of the vivid interest, of the excitement even, which attached to this new discovery of the importance of one's appearance. Before going downstairs she brushed the tangles out of her thick brown hair, and spent a half hour arranging it in a becoming fashion upon her neck.

The next day Micah was well enough to carry the milk to Mrs. Berry's, but three mornings afterward, when she came from the dairy with the can, the old negro was not waiting for her on the porch, and she found, upon going to his cabin, that the attack of rheumatism had returned with violence. There was nothing for her to do but carry the milk herself, so after leading Major from his stall, she mounted and rode, almost with a feeling of shyness, in the direction of Bullfinch's Hollow.

The door was closed this morning, and in answer to her knock, Mrs. Berry appeared, rubbing her eyes, beyond the threshold.

"I declare, Miss Emily, you don't look like yourself at all," she exclaimed at the girl's entrance, "it must be them coral beads you 've got on, I reckon. They always was becomin' things—I had a string once myself that I used to wear when my po' dead husband was courtin' me. Lord! Lord!" she added, bursting into sobs, "who 'd have thought when I wore those beads that I 'd ever have come to this? My po' ma gave 'em to me herself—they were her weddin' present from her first husband, and when she made up her mind to marry again, she kind of thought it warn't modest to go aroun' wearin' what she 'd got from her first marriage. She was always powerful sensitive to decency, was po' ma. I 've seen her scent vulgarity in the most harmless soundin' speech you ever heard—such as when my husband asked her one day if she was afflicted with the budges in her knee, and she told me afterward that he had made a sneakin' allusion to her leg. Ten years from that time, when all my trouble came upon me, she held that over me as a kind of warnin'. 'If you 'd listened to me, Sarindy,' she used to say, 'you 'd never have got into this scrape of marryin' a man who talked free befo' women. For a man who is indecent in his language can't be decent in his life,' she said."

As she talked she was pouring the milk into the cracked pitcher, and Emily breaking in at the first pause, sought to hasten the washing of the can, by

bringing the old woman's rambling attention back to Kit.

"Has he had a quiet night?" she asked.

"Well, yes, miss, in a way, but then he always was what you might call a quiet sleeper from the very hour that he was born. I remember old Aunt Jemima, his monthly nurse, tellin' me that she had never in all her experience brought a more reliable sleeper into the world. He never used to stir, except to whimper now and then for his sugar rag when it slipped out of his mouth."

Hurriedly seizing the half-washed can, Emily caught up her skirt and moved toward the door.

"Did you sit up with him last night?" she asked, turning upon the step.

"That was Mr. Smith's night, miss—he's taken such a fancy to Kit that he comes every other night to watch by him—but he gets up and leaves now a little before daybreak. I heard him choppin' wood before the sun was up."

"He has been very kind about it, has n't he?"

"Lord, miss, he 's been a son and a brother as far as work goes, but I declare I can't help wishin' he was n't quite so shut mouthed. Every blessed sound he utters I have to drag out of him like a fox out of a burrow. He 's a little cranky, too, I reckon, for he is so absent-minded that sometimes when you call his name he never even turns aroun'. But the Lord will overlook his unsociable ways, I s'pose, for he reads his Bible half the night when he sets up, jest as hard as if he was paid to do it. That 's

as good a recommendation, I reckon, as I need to have."

"I should think his charity would be a better one,' rejoined Emily, with severity.

"Well, that 's as it may be, Miss," returned Mrs. Berry, "I 'm not ungrateful, I hope, and I 'm much obliged for what he gives me—particularly for the coffee, which ain't as thin as it might be seein' it's a present. But when all 's said I ain't so apt to jedge by things like that because charity is jest a kind of Saint Vitus dance with some folks—it 's all in the muscles. Thank you, miss, yes, Kit is doin' very well."

Mounting from the step, Emily turned back into the Tappahannock road, aware as she passed through the deserted fields that her exaltation of the morning had given way before a despondency which seemed to change the face of nature. The day was oppressive, the road ugly, Mrs. Berry more tiresome than usual—each of these things suggested itself as a possible reason for the dissatisfaction which she could not explain. Not once during her troubled mood did the name or the face of Ordway appear as the visible cause of her disturbance. So far, indeed, was his individual aspect from her reflections, that some hours later, when she rode back to school, it was with a shock of surprise that she saw him turn the corner by the new brick church, and come rapidly toward her from the brow of the long hill. That he had not at first seen her was evident, for he walked in an abstracted reverie with his eyes on the ground,

and when he looked up at last, she had drawn almost within speaking distance. At sight of his face her heart beat so quickly that she dropped the reins on Major's neck, and raised her free hand to her bosom, while she felt the blood mount joyously to her cheeks; but, to her amazement, in the first instant of recognition, he turned abruptly away and entered the shop of a harness maker which happened to be immediately on his right. The action was so sudden that even as she quickened her horse's pace, there flashed into her mind the humiliating conviction that he had sought purposely to avoid her. The throbs of her heart grew faster and then seemed to die utterly away, yet even as the warm blood turned cold in her cheeks, she told herself with spirit that it was all because she "could not bear to be disliked." "Why should he dislike me?" she questioned presently; "it is very foolish of him, and what have I done?" She searched her memory for some past rudeness of which she had been guilty, but there was nothing she could recall which would justify, however slightly, his open avoidance of a chance meeting. "Perhaps he does n't like the colour of my hair. I 've heard men were like that," she thought, "or the freckles on my face? Or the roughness of my hands?" But the instant afterward she saw how ridiculous were her surmises, and she felt angry with herself for having permitted them to appear in her mind. She remembered his blue eyes with the moonlight upon them, and she wondered why he had seemed to her more masculine than any man that she had ever known.

With the memory of his eyes and his smile she smelt again the odour of the warm earth that had clung about him, and she was conscious that this and everything about him was strange and new as if she had never looked into a pair of blue eyes or smelt the odour of the soil before.

After this meeting she did not see Ordway again for several weeks, and then it was only to pass him in the road one Sunday afternoon when he had finished his sermon in the old field. As he drew back among the thistles, he spoke to her gravely, with a deference, she noticed, which had the effect of placing him apart from her as a member of the working class. Since Kit Berry's recovery she had not gone again to Bullfinch's Hollow; and she could not fail to observe that even when an opportunity appeared, Ordway made no further effort to bridge the mere casual acquaintance which divided rather than united them. If it were possible to avoid conversation with her he did so by retiring into the background; if the event forced him into notice, he addressed her with a reserve which seemed at each meeting to widen the distance between them.

Though she hardly confessed it to herself, her heart was wounded for a month or two by his frank indifference to her presence. Then one bright afternoon in May, when she had observed him turn out of his path as she rode up the hill, she saved the situation in her mind by the final triumph of her buoyant humour.

"Everybody is privileged to be a little fool," she

said with a laugh, "but when there 's the danger of becoming a great big one, it 's time to stop short and turn round. Now, Emily, my dear, you 're to stop short from this minute. I hope you understand me."

That the Emily she addressed understood her very clearly was proved a little later in the afternoon, when going upstairs to her bedroom, she unfastened the coral beads and laid them away again among the mourning brooches and the hair bracelets in the leather case.

# BOOK SECOND

# THE DAY OF RECKONING

## CHAPTER I

### In Which a Stranger Appears

On a bright June morning, when Ordway had been more than two years at Tappahannock, he came out upon Mrs. Twine's little porch as soon as breakfast was over, and looked down the board walk for Harry Banks, who had fallen into the habit of accompanying him to the warehouse. From where he stood, under the hanging blossoms of the locust trees, he could see the painted tin roofs and the huddled chimneys of the town, flanked by the brazen sweep of the cornfields along the country roads. As his eyes rested on the familiar scene, they softened unconsciously with an affection which was almost paternal—for in the last two years Tappahannock had become a different place from the Tappahannock he had entered as a tramp on that windy afternoon in March. The town as it stood to-day was the town which he had helped to make, and behind each roll of progress there had been the informing purpose of his mind, as well as the strength of his shoulder at the wheel. Behind the law which had closed the disreputable barrooms; behind the sentiment for decency which had purified the filthy hollows; behind the spirit of charity which had organised and opened, not only a reading room

for the factory workers, but an industrial home for the poorer classes—behind each of these separate movements there had been a single energy to plan and act. In two years he had watched the little town cover the stretch of ten years' improvement; in two years he had aroused and vitalised the community into which he had come a stranger. Tappahannock was the child of his brain—the life that was in her to-day he had given her out of himself, and the love he felt for her was the love that one bestows upon one's own. Standing there his eyes followed the street to the ugly brick church at the corner, and then as his mental vision travelled down the long, hot hill which led to the railroad, he could tell himself, with a kind of exultation, that there was hardly a dwelling along the way which had not some great or little reason to bless his name. Even Kelly, whose saloon he had closed, had been put upon his feet again and started, with a fair chance, in the tobacco market. Yes, a new life had been given him, and he had made good his promise to himself. The clothes he wore to-day were as rough as those in which he had chopped wood in Bullfinch's Hollow; the room he lived in was the same small, bare lodging of Mrs. Twine's; for though his position at Baxter's now assured him a comfortable income, he had kept to his cramped manner of life in order that he might contribute the more generously to the lives of others. Out of his little he had given abundantly, and he had gained in return the happiness which he had ceased to make the object of his search. In looking back

over his whole life, he could honestly tell himself that his happiest years since childhood were the ones that he had spent in Tappahannock.

The gate closed with a slam, and Banks came up the short brick walk inside, mopping his heated face with a pink bordered handkerchief.

"I 'm a minute late," he said, "but it doesn 't matter, does it? The Trends asked me to breakfast."

"It doesn 't matter in the least if you spent that minute with Milly," replied Ordway, with a laugh, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and descended the steps. "The hot weather has come early, hasn 't it?"

"Oh, we 're going in for a scorcher," responded Banks, indifferently. There was a heavy gloom in his manner which was hardly to be accounted for by the temperature in which he moved, and as they closed the gate behind them and passed under the shade of the locust trees on the board walk, he turned to Ordway in an outburst which was little short of desperation.

"I don't know how it is—or whether it 's just a woman's way," he said, "but I never can be sure of Milly for ten minutes at a time. A month ago I was positive that she meant to marry me in the autumn, but now I'm in a kind of blue funk about her doing it at all. She's never been the same since she went North in April."

"My dear chap, these things will vary, I suppose—though, mind you, I make no claim to exact knowledge of the sex."

"It is n't the sex," said Banks, "it 's Milly."

"Well, I certainly can't claim any particular knowledge of Milly. It would be rather presumptuous if I did, considering I 've only seen her about a dozen times—mostly at a distance."

"I wish you knew her better, perhaps you could help me," returned Banks in a voice of melancholy. "To save the life of me I don't see how it is—I 've done my best—I swear I've done my best—yet nothing somehow seems to suit her. She wants to make me over from the skin and even that does n't satisfy her. When my hair is short she wants it long, and when it 's long she says she wants it short. She can't stand me in coloured cravats and when I put on a black tie she calls me an undertaker. I had to leave off my turtle-dove scarf-pin and this morning," he rolled his innocent blue eyes, like pale marbles, in the direction of Ordway, "she actually got into a temper about my stockings."

"It seems to be a case for sympathy," commented Ordway seriously, "but hardly, I should say, for marriage. Imagine, my dear Banks, what a hell you 'd make out of your domesticity. Suppose you give her up and bear it like a man?"

"Give her up? to what?"

"Well, to her own amiability, we 'll say."

"I can't" said Banks, waving his pink bordered handkerchief before his face in an effort either to disperse the swarming blue flies or to conceal the working of his emotion. "I 'd die—I 'd kill myself—that's the awful part of it. The more she bangs me

over the head, the more I feel that I can't live without her. Is that natural, do you s'pose?" he inquired uneasily, "or have I gone clean crazy?"

Checking his smile severely, Ordway turned and slipped his left arm affectionately through his companion's.

"I 've heard of similar cases," he remarked, "though I confess, they sounded a little strained."

"Do you think I 'd better see a doctor? I will if you say so."

"By no means. Go off on a trip."

"And leave Milly here? I 'd jump out of the train —and, I reckon, she 'd bang my head off for doing it."

"But if it 's as bad as that, you couldn't be much more miserable without her."

"I know it," replied Banks obstinately, "but it would be a different sort of miserableness, and that happens to be the sort that I can't stand."

"Then I give it up," said Ordway, cheerfully, "there 's no hope but marriage."

With his words they turned under the archway of Baxter's warehouse, and Banks's passionate confidences were extinguished in the odour of tobacco.

A group of men stood talking loudly in the centre of the building, and as Ordway approached, Baxter broke away, with his great rolling laugh, and came to join him at the door of his private office.

"Catesby and Frazier have got into a squabble about that lot of tobacco they brought in last February," he said, "and they have both agreed to accept your decision in the matter."

Ordway nodded, without replying, as he followed the other through the doorway. Such judicial appeals to him were not uncommon, and his power of pacification, as his employer had once remarked, was one of his principal qualifications for the tobacco market.

"Shall I hear them now? or would it be as well to give them time to cool off?" he asked presently, while Baxter settled his great person in a desk chair that seemed a size too small to contain it.

"If they can cool off on a day like this they 're lucky dogs," returned Baxter, with a groan, "however, I reckon you might as well get it over and let 'em go home and stew in peace. By the way, Smith, I forgot to tell you that Major Leary—he 's the president of the Southside Bank, you know, was asking me yesterday if I could tell him anything about you before you came to work for me."

"Of the Southside Bank," repeated Ordway, while his hand closed tightly over a paper weight, representing a gambolling kitten, which lay on Baxter's desk. With the words he was conscious only of the muffled drumming of his pulses, and above the discord in his ears, the cheerful tones of Baxter sounded like an echo rather than a real voice. At the instant he was back again in his room in the great banking house of Amos, Bonner & Amos, in the midst of the pale brown walls, the black oak furniture and the shining leather covered volumes behind the glass doors of the bookcases. With peculiar vividness he remembered the eccentric little bird on the bronze

clock on the mantel, which had hopped from its swinging perch to strike the hour with its beak; and through the open windows he could hear still the din of traffic in the street below and the ceaseless, irregular tread of footsteps upon the pavement.

"Oh, I did n't mean to raise your hopes too high," remarked Baxter, rising from his chair to slap him affectionately upon the shoulder, "he is n't going to make you president of the bank, but of the Citizen's Improvement League, whose object is to oust Jasper Trend, you know, in the autumn. The Major told me before he left that you 'd done as much for Tappahannock in two years as any other man had done in a lifetime. I said I thought he 'd hit the nail pretty squarely, which is something he does n't generally manage to do."

"So I'm to fight Jasper Trend, am I?" asked Ordway, with sudden interest. The sound of his throbbing arteries was no longer in his ears, and as he spoke, he felt that his past life with his old identity had departed from him. In the swift renewal of his confidence he had become again "Ten Commandment Smith" of Tappahannock.

"Well, you see, Jasper has been a precious bad influence around here," pursued Baxter, engrossed in the political scheme he was unfolding. "The only thing on earth he 's got to recommend him is his pretty daughter. Now, I 've a soft enough heart, as everybody knows, when the ladies come about—particularly if they 're pretty—but I 'm ready to stand up and say that Jasper Trend can't be allowed to

run this town on the platform of pure chivalry. There 's such a thing as fairness, suh, even where women are concerned, and I 'll back my word with my oath that it ain't fair!"

"And I 'll back your word with another that it isn 't," rejoined Ordway.

"There 's no doubt, I reckon," continued Baxter, "that Jasper has connived with those disorderly saloons that you 've been trying to shut up, and for all his money and the men he employs in the cotton mills there 's come a considerable reaction against him in public sentiment. Now, I ain't afraid to say, Smith," he concluded with an ample flourish of his dirty hand, "that the fact that there 's any public sentiment at all in Tappahannock is due to you. Until you came here there weren't six decent men you could count mixed up in the affairs of this town. Jasper had everything his own way, that 's why he hates you."

"But I was n't even aware that he did me so much honour."

"You mean he has n't told you his feelings to your face. Well, he has n't gone so far as to confide them to me either—but even if I ain't a woman, I can hear some things that ain't spoke out in words. He 's made a dirty town and you 're sweepin' it clean—do you think it likely that it makes him love you?"

"He 's welcome to feel about me any way he pleases, but do you know, Baxter," he added with his whimsical gravity, "I 've a pretty strong conviction that I'd make a jolly good street sweeper."

"I reckon you 're right!" roared Baxter, "and when you 're done, we 'll shoot off some sky-rockets over the job—so there you are, ain't you?"

"All right—but there 's Jasper Trend also," retorted Ordway.

"Oh, he can afford to send off his own sky-rockets. We need n't bother about him. He won't be out of a job like Kelly, you know. Great Scott!" he added, chuckling, "I can see your face now when you marched in here the day after you closed Kelly's saloon, and told me you had to start a man in tobacco because you 'd taken him out of whiskey."

His laugh shook through his figure until Ordway saw his fat chest heave violently beneath his alpaca coat. Custom had made the younger man almost indifferent to the external details which had once annoyed him in his employer, and he hardly noticed now that Baxter's coat was turning from black to green and that the old ashes from his pipe had lodged in the crumpled bosom of his shirt. Baxter was—well, Baxter, and tolerance was a virtue which one acquired sooner or later in Tappahannock.

"I suppose I might as well get at Catesby and Frazier now," remarked Ordway, watching the other disinter a tattered palm leaf fan from beneath a dusty pile of old almanacs and catalogues.

"Wait a minute first," said Baxter, "there 's something I want to say as soon as I get settled. I ain't made for heat, that 's certain," he pursued, as he pulled off his coat, and hung it from a nail in the wall, "it sweats all my morals out of me."

Detaching the collar from his shirt, he placed it above his coat on the nail, and then rolling up his shirt sleeves, sank, with a panting breath, back into his chair.

"If I were you I 'd get out of this at night anyway, Smith," he urged. "Why don't you try boarding for the next few months over at Cedar Hill. It would be a godsend to the family, now that Miss Emily's school has stopped."

"But I don't suppose they'd take me in," replied Ordway, staring out into the street, where the dust rose like steam in the air, and the rough-coated country horses toiled patiently up the long hill. Across the way he saw the six stale currant buns and the three bottles of pale beer behind the fly-specked window panes of a cheap eating house. In front of them, a Negro woman, barefooted, with her ragged calico dress tucked up about her waist, was sousing the steaming board walk with a pailful of dirty water. From his memory of two years ago there floated the mingled odours of wild flowers and freshly turned earth in the garden of Cedar Hill, and Emily appeared in his thoughts only as an appropriate figure against the pleasant natural background of the lilacs and the meadows. In the past year he had seen her hardly more than a dozen times—mere casual glimpses for the most part—and he had almost forgotten his earlier avoidance of her, which had resulted from an instinctive delicacy rather than from any premeditated purpose. His judgment had told him that he had no right to permit a woman to become his

friend in ignorance of his past; and at the same time he was aware of a terrible shrinking from intruding his old self, however remotely, into the new life at Tappahannock. When the choice came between confessing his sin and sacrificing the chance acquaintance, he had found it easier simply to keep away from her actual presence. Yet his interest in her had been so closely associated with his larger feeling for humanity, that he could tell himself with sincerity that it was mere folly which put her forward as an objection to his boarding for the summer at Cedar Hill.

"The truth is," admitted Baxter, after a pause, "that Mrs. Brooke spoke to me about having to take a boarder or two, when I went out there to pay Mr. Beverly for that tobacco I could n't sell."

"So you bought it in the end," laughed Ordway, "as you did last year after sending me out there on a mission?"

"Yes, I bought it," replied Baxter, blushing like a boy under the beads of perspiration upon his face. "I may as well confess it, though I tried to keep it secret. But I ask you as man to man," he demanded warmly, "was there another blessed thing on God's earth for me to do?"

"Let Mr. Beverly go about his business—that 's what I'd have done."

"Oh, no, you would n't," protested Baxter softly, "not when he 'd ruin himself for you to-morrow if you were to walk out and ask him."

"But he could n't," insisted Ordway with the

brutality of the naked fact, "he did that little job on his own account too long ago."

"But that ain't the point, Smith," replied Baxter in an awed and solemn accent. "The point ain't that he couldn't, but that he *would*. As I make it out that's the point which has cost me money on him for the last thirty years."

"Oh, well, I suppose it's a charity like any other, only the old fool is so pompous about his poverty that it wears me out."

"It does at Tappahannock, but it won't when you get out to Cedar Hill, that's the difference between Mr. Beverly in the air and Mr. Beverly in the flesh. The one wears you out, the other rests you for all his darnation foolishness. Now, you can board out there for twenty-five dollars a month and put a little ready money where it ought to be in Mrs. Brooke's pocket."

"Of course I'd like it tremendously," said Ordway, after a moment in which the perfume of the lilacs filled his memory. "It would be like stepping into heaven after that stifling little room under the tin roof at Mrs. Twine's. Do you know I slept out in the fields every hot night last summer?"

"You see you ain't a native of these parts," remarked Baxter with a large resigned movement of his palm leaf fan, "and your skin ain't thick enough to keep out the heat. I'll speak to 'em at Cedar Hill this very day, and if you like, I reckon, you can move out at the beginning of the week. I hope if you do, Smith, that you'll bear with Mr. Beverly. There's

nothing in the universe that he wouldn't do for me if he had the chance. It ain't his fault, you see, that he's never had it."

"Oh, I promise you I'll bear with him," laughed Ordway, as he left the office and went out into the warehouse.

The knot of men was still in the centre of the building, and as Ordway walked down the long floor in search of Catesby and Frazier, he saw that a stranger had drifted in during his half hour in Baxter's office. With his first casual glance all that he observed of the man was a sleek fair head, slightly bald in the centre, and a pair of abnormally flat shoulders in a light gray coat, which had evidently left a clothing shop only a day or two before. Then as Frazier—a big, loud voiced planter—turned toward him with the exclamation, "here's Smith, himself, now!"—he saw the stranger wheel round abruptly and give vent the next instant to a sharp whistle of surprise.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he said.

For a minute the tobacco dust filled Ordway's throat and nostrils, and he felt that he was stifling for a breath of air. The dim length of the warehouse and the familiar shadowy figures of the planters receded before his eyes, and he saw again the bare walls of the prison chapel, with the rows of convicts seated in the pale, greenish light. With his recognition of the man before him, it seemed to him suddenly that the last year in Tappahannock was all a lie. The prison walls, the grated windows, and

the hard benches of the shoe shop were closer realities than were the open door of the warehouse and the free, hot streets of the little town

"I am very happy to meet you, Mr. Smith," said the stranger, as he held out his hand with a good-humoured smile.

"I beg your pardon," returned Ordway quietly, "but I did not catch your name."

At the handshake a chill mounted from his finger tips to his shoulder, but drawing slightly away he stood his ground without so much as the perceptible flicker of an eyelash.

"My name is Brown—Horatio Brown, very much at your service," answered the other, with a manner like that of a successful, yet obsequious commercial traveller.

It was on Ordway's tongue to retort: "You lie—it's Gus Wherry!"—but checking the impulse with a frown, he turned on his heel and asked the two men for whom he was looking to come with him to settle their disagreement in Baxter's office. As he moved down the building an instant later, it was with an effort that he kept his gaze fixed straight ahead through the archway, for he was aware that every muscle in his body pricked him to turn back and follow Wherry to the end. That the man would be forced, in self-defence, to keep his secret for a time at least, he had caught in the smiling insolence of his glance; but that it was possible to enter into a permanent association or even a treaty with Gus Wherry, he knew to be a supposition that

was utterly beyond the question. The crime for which the man had been sentenced he could not remember; but he had a vague recollection that something morbidly romantic in his history had combined with his handsome face to give him an ephemeral notoriety as the Adonis of imaginative shop-girls. Even in prison Wherry had attained a certain prominence because of his beauty, which at the time when Ordway first saw him had been conspicuous in spite of his convict's clothes. In the years since then his athletic figure had grown a trifle too heavy, and his fair hair had worn a little thin on the crown of his head; yet these slight changes of time had left him, Ordway admitted reluctantly, still handsome in the brawny, full-blooded style, which had generally made fools of women. His lips were still as red, his features as severely classic, and his manner was not less vulgar, and quite as debonnair as in the days when the newspapers had clamoured for his pictures. Even the soft, girlish cleft in his smooth-shaven chin, Ordway remembered now, with a return of the instinctive aversion with which it had first inspired him. Yet he was obliged to confess, as he walked ahead of Catesby and Frazier down the dusty floor of the warehouse, that if Wherry had been less of an uncompromising rascal, he would probably have made a particularly amiable acquaintance.

## CHAPTER II

### Ordway Compromises With the Past

When Ordway came out of Baxter's office, he found that Gus Wherry had left the warehouse, but the effect upon him of the man's appearance in Tappahannock was not to be overcome by the temporary withdrawal of his visible presence. Not only the town, but existence itself seemed altered, and in a way polluted, by the obtrusion of Wherry's personality upon the scene. Though he was not in the building, Ordway felt an angry conviction that he was in the air. It was impossible to breathe freely lest he might by accident draw in some insidious poison which would bring him under the influence of his past life and of Gus Wherry.

As he went along the street at one o'clock to his dinner at Mrs. Twine's, he was grateful for the intensity of the sun, which rendered him, while he walked in it, almost incapable of thought. There was positive relief in the fact that he must count the uneven lengths of board walk which it was necessary for him to traverse, and the buzzing of the blue flies before his face forced his attention, at the minute, from the inward to the outward disturbance.

When he reached the house, Mrs. Twine met him at the door and led him, with an inquiry as to his

susceptibility to sunstroke, into the awful gloom of her tightly shuttered parlour.

"I declar' you do look well nigh in yo' last gasp," she remarked cheerfully, bustling into the dining-room for a palm leaf fan. "Thar, now, come right in an' set down an' eat yo' dinner. Hot or cold, glad or sorry, I never saw the man yit that could stand goin' without his dinner at the regular hour. Sech is the habit in some folks that I remember when old Mat Fawling's second wife died he actually hurried up her funeral an hour earlier so as to git back in time for dinner. 'It ain't that I'm meanin' any disrespect to Sary, Mrs. Twine,' he said to me right whar I was layin' her out, 'but the truth is that I can't even mourn on an empty stomach. The undertaker put it at twelve,' he said, 'but I reckon we might manage to git out to the cemetery by eleven.' "

"All the same if you'll give me a slice of bread and a glass of milk, I'll take it standing," remarked Ordway. "I'm sorry to leave you, Mrs. Twine, even for a few months," he added, "but I think I'll try to get board outside the town until the summer is over."

"Well, I'll hate to lose you, suh, to be sure," responded Mrs. Twine, dealing out the fried batter with a lavish hand despite his protest, "for I respect you as a fellow mortal, though I despise you as a sex."

Her hard eyes softened as she looked at him; but his gaze was on the walnut coloured oilcloth, where the flies dispersed lazily before the waving elm branch

in the hands of the small Negro, and so he did not observe the motherly tenderness which almost beautified her shrewish face.

"You've been very kind to me," he said, as he put his glass and plate down, and turned toward the door. "Whatever happens I shall always remember you and the children with pleasure."

She choked violently, and looking back at the gasping sound, he saw that her eyes had filled suddenly with tears. Lifting a corner of her blue gingham apron, she mopped her face in a furious effort to conceal the cause of her unaccustomed emotion.

"I declar' I'm all het up," she remarked in an indignant voice, "but if you should ever need a friend in sickness, Mr. Smith," she added, after a moment in which she choked and coughed under the shelter of her apron, "you jest send for me an' I'll drop every thing I've got an' go. I'll leave husband an' children without a thought, suh, an' thar's nothin' I won't do for you with pleasure, from makin' a mustard plaster to layin' out yo' corpse. When I'm a friend, I'm a friend, if I do say it, an' you've had a way with me from the very first minute that I clapped eyes upon you. 'He may not have sech calves as you've got,' was what I said to Bill, 'but he's got a manner of his own, an' I reckon it's the manner an' not the calves that is the man.' Not that I'm meaning any slur on yo' shape, suh," she hastened to explain.

"Well, I'll come to see you now and then," said

Ordway, smiling, "and I shan't forget to take the children for a picnic as I promised." But with the words he remembered Gus Wherry, as he had seen him standing in the centre of Baxter's warehouse, and it seemed to him that even his promise to the children was rendered vain and worthless.

The next day was Sunday, and immediately after dinner he walked over to Baxter's house, where he learned that Mrs. Brooke had expressed her willingness to receive him upon the following afternoon.

"We had to talk Mr. Beverly over," said Baxter, chuckling. "At first he didn't like the idea because of some notion he'd got out of his great-grandfather's head about the sacredness of the family circle. However, he's all right now, though if you take my advice, Smith, you'll play a game of dominoes with him occasionally just to keep him kind of soft. The chief thing he has against you is your preachin' in the fields, for he told me he could never bring himself to countenance religion out of doors. He seems to think that it ought to be kept shut up tight."

"Well, I'm glad he doesn't have to listen to me," responded Ordway. "By the way, you know I'm speaking in Catlett's grove of pines now. It's pleasanter away from the glare of the sun." Then as Baxter pressed him to come back to supper, he declined the oppressive hospitality and went back to Mrs. Twine's.

That afternoon at five o'clock he went out to the grove of pines on the Southern edge of the town, to find his congregation gathered ahead of him on the rude

plank benches which had been placed among the trees. The sunshine fell in drops through the tent of boughs overhead, and from the southwest a pleasant breeze had sprung up, blowing the pine needles in eddies about his feet. At sight of the friendly faces gathered so closely around him, he felt his foreboding depart as if it had been blown from him by the pure breeze; and beginning his simple discourse, he found himself absorbed presently in the religious significance of his subject, which chanced to be an interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son. Not until he was midway of his last sentence did he discover that Gus Wherry was standing just beyond the little wildrose thicket on the edge of the grove.

In the instant of recognition the words upon his lips sounded strangely hollow and meaningless in his ears, and he felt again that the appearance of the man had given the lie, not only to his identity, but to his life. He knew himself at the instant to have changed from Daniel Smith to Daniel Ordway, and the name that he had worn honestly in Tappahannock showed to him suddenly as a falsehood and a cheat. Even his inward motive was contemptible in his eyes, and he felt himself dragged back in a single minute to the level upon which Wherry stood. As he appeared to Wherry, so he saw himself now by some distorted power of vision, and even his religion seemed but a convenient mask which he had picked up and used. When he went on a moment later with his closing words, he felt that the mockery of his

speech must be evident to the ears of the congregation that knew and loved him.

The gathering broke up slowly, but after speaking to several men who stood near him, Ordway turned away and went out into the road which led from Tappahannock in the direction of Cedar Hill. Only after he had walked rapidly for a mile, did the sound of footsteps, following close behind him, cause him to wheel round abruptly with an impatient exclamation. As he did so, he saw that Wherry had stopped short in the road before him.

"I wanted to tell you how much obliged I am for your talk, Mr. Smith," he said, with a smile which appeared to flash at the same instant from his eyes and his teeth. "I declare you came pretty near converting me—by Jove, you did. It wouldn't be convenient to listen to you too often."

Whatever might be said of the effusive manner of his compliments, his good humour was so evident in his voice, in his laugh, and even in his conspicuously flashing teeth, that Ordway, who had been prepared for a quarrel, was rendered almost helpless by so peaceable an encounter. Turning out of the road, he stepped back among the tall weeds growing in the corner of the old "worm" fence, and rested his tightly clinched hand on the topmost rail.

"If you have anything to say to me, you will do me a favour by getting it over as soon as possible," he rejoined shortly.

Wherry had taken off his hat and the red disc of the setting sun made an appropriate frame for his

handsome head, upon which his fair hair grew, Ordway noticed, in the peculiar waving circle which is found on the heads of ancient statues.

"Well, I can't say that I've anything to remark except that I congratulate you on your eloquence," he replied, with a kind of infernal amiability. "If this is your little game, you are doing it with a success which I envy from my boots up."

"Since this is your business with me, there is no need for us to discuss it further," returned Ordway, at white heat.

"Oh, but I say, don't hurry—what's the use? You're afraid I'm going to squeeze you, now, isn't that it?"

"You'll get nothing out of me if you try."

"That's as much as I want, I guess. Have I asked you for as much as a darned cent? Haven't I played the gentleman from the first minute that I spotted you?"

Ordway nodded. "Yes, I suppose you've been as fair as you knew how," he answered, "I'll do you the justice to admit that."

"Well, I tell you now," said Wherry, growing confidential as he approached, "my object isn't blackmail, it's human intercourse. I want a decent word or two, that's all, on my honour."

"But I won't talk to you. I've nothing further to say, that's to be understood."

"You're a confounded bully, that's what you are," observed Wherry, in the playful tones which he might have used to a child or an animal. "Now, I don't

want a blooming cent out of you, that's flat—all I ask for is a pleasant word or two just as from man to man."

"Then why did you follow me? And what are you after in Tappahannock?"

Wherry laughed hilariously, while his remarkably fine teeth became the most prominent feature in his face.

"The reply to your question, Smith," he answered pleasantly, "is that I followed you to say that you're an all-fired, first rate sort of a preacher—there's not harm in that much, is there? If you don't want me to chaff you about it, I'll swear to be as dead serious on the subject as if it were my wife's funeral. What I want is your hand down, I say—no matter what is trumps!"

"My hand down for what?" demanded Ordway.

"Just for plain decency, nothing more, I swear. You've started on your road, and I've started on mine, and the square thing is to live and let live, that's as I see it. Leave room for honest repentance to go to work, but don't begin to pull back before it's had a chance to begin. Ain't we all prodigals, when it comes to that, and the only difference is that some of us don't get a bite at the fatted calf."

For a moment Ordway stared in silence to where the other stood with his face turned toward the red light of the sunset.

"We're all prodigals," repeated Wherry, as if impressed by the ethical problem he had uttered unawares, "you and me and the President and every

man. We've all fallen from grace, ain't we?—and it's neither here nor there that you and I have got the swine husks while the President has stuffed and eaten the fatted calf."

"If you've honestly meant to begin again, I have certainly no wish to interfere," remarked Ordway, ignoring the other's excursion into the field of philosophy. As he spoke, however, it occurred to him that Wherry's reformation might have had better chance of success if it had been associated with fewer physical advantages.

"Well, I'm much obliged to you," said Wherry, "and I'll say the same by you, here's my hand on it. Rise or fall, we'll play fair."

"You haven't told me yet why you came to Tappahannock," rejoined Ordway, shortly.

"Oh, a little matter of business. Are you settled here now?"

"At the moment you can answer that question better than I."

"You mean when I come, you quit?"

Ordway nodded. "That's something like it."

"Well, I shan't drive you out if I can help it—I hate to play the sneak. The truth is if you'd only get to believe it, there's not a more peaceable fellow alive if I don't get backed up into a place where there's no way out. When it comes to that I like the clean, straight road best, and I always have. From first to last, though, it's the women that have been dead against me, and I may say that a woman—one or more of 'em—has been back of every single

scrape I ever got into in my life. If I'd had ten thousand a year and a fine looking wife, I'd have been a pillar in the Church and the father of a family. My tastes all lean that way," he added sentimentally. "I've always had a weakness for babies, and I've got it to this day."

As he could think of nothing to reply to this touching confession, Ordway picked up a bit of wood from the ground, and taking out his knife, began whittling carelessly while he waited.

"I suppose you think I want to work you for that fat old codger in the warehouse," observed Wherry suddenly, passing lightly from the pathetic to the facetious point of view, "but I'll give you my word I haven't thought of it a minute."

"I'm glad you haven't," returned Ordway, quietly, "for you would be disappointed."

"You mean you wouldn't trust me?"

"I mean there's no place there. Whether I trust you or not is another question—and I don't."

"Do you think I'd turn sneak?"

"I think if you stay in Tappahannock that I'll clear out."

"Well, you're a darn disagreeable chap," said Wherry, indignantly, "particularly after all you've had to say about the prodigal. But, all the same," he added, as his natural amiability got the better of his temper, "it isn't likely that I'll pitch my tent here, so you needn't begin to pack for a day or two at least."

"Do you expect to go shortly?"

"How about to-morrow? Would that suit you?"

"Yes," said Ordway, gravely, "better than the day afterward." He threw the bit of wood away and looked steadily into the other's face. "If I can help you live honestly, I am ready to do it," he added.

"Ready? How?"

"However I can."

"Well, you can't—not now," returned Wherry, laughing, "because I've worked that little scheme already without your backing. Honesty is going to be my policy from yesterday on. Did you, by the way," he added abruptly, "ever happen to run up against Jasper Trend?"

"Jasper Trend?" exclaimed Ordway, "why, yes, he owns the cotton mills."

"He makes a handsome little pile out of 'em too, I guess?"

"I believe he does. Are you looking for a job with him?"

At this Wherry burst again into his hilarious humour. "If I am," he asked jokingly, "will you promise to stand off and not spoil the game?"

"I have nothing to do with Trend," replied Ordway, "but the day you come here is my last in Tappahannock."

"Well, I'm sorry for that," remarked Wherry, pleasantly, "for it appears to be a dull enough place even with the addition of your presence." He put on his hat and held out his hand with a friendly gesture. "Are you ready to walk back now?" he inquired.

"When I am," answered Ordway, "I shall walk back alone."

Even this rebuff Wherry accepted with his invincible good temper.

"Every man to his company, of course," he responded, "but as to my coming to Tappahannock, if it is any comfort to you to know it, you needn't begin to pack."

## CHAPTER III

### A Change of Lodging

When Ordway awoke the next morning, it seemed to him that Wherry had taken his place among the other nightmares, which, combined with the reflected heat from the tin roof, had rendered his sleep broken and distracted. With the sunrise his evil dreams and his recollections of Wherry had scattered together, and when, after the early closing at Baxter's warehouse, he drove out to Cedar Hill, with the leather bag containing his few possessions at his feet, he felt that there had been something morbid, almost inhuman, in the loathing aroused in him by the handsome face of his fellow prisoner. In any case, for good or for evil, he determined to banish the man utterly from his thoughts.

The vehicle in which he sat was an ancient gig driven by a decrepit Negro, and as it drew up before the steps at Cedar Hill, he was conscious almost of a sensation of shame because he had not approached the ruined mansion on foot. Then descending over the dusty wheel, he lifted out his bag, and rapped twice upon the open door with the greenish knocker which he supposed had once been shining brass. Through the hall a sleepy breeze blew from the honeysuckle arbour over the back

porch, and at his right hand the swinging sword still clanked against the discoloured plaster. So quiet was the house that it seemed as if the movement of life within had been suspended, and when at last the figure of Mrs. Brooke floated down the great staircase under the pallid light from the window above, she appeared to him as the disembodied spirit of one of the historic belles who had tripped up and down in trailing brocades and satin shoes. Instead of coming toward him, she completed her ghostly impression by vanishing suddenly into the gloom beyond the staircase, and a moment afterward his knock was answered by a small, embarrassed darky in purple calico. Entering the dining-room by her invitation, he stumbled upon Beverly stretched fast asleep, and snoring slightly, upon a horsehair sofa, with the brown and white setter dozing on a mat at his feet. At the approach of footsteps, the dog, without lifting its head, began rapping the floor heavily with its tail, and aroused by the sound, Beverly opened one eye and struggled confusedly into an upright position.

"I was entirely overcome by the heat," he remarked apologetically, as he rose from the sofa and held out his hand, "but it is a pleasure to see you, Mr. Smith. I hope you did not find the sun oppressive on your drive out. Amelia, my dear," he remarked courteously, as Mrs. Brooke entered in a freshly starched print gown, "I feel a return of that strange dizziness I spoke of, so if it will not inconvenience you, may I beg for another of your refreshing lemonades?"

Mrs. Brooke, who had just completed the hasty ironing of her dress, which she had put on while it was still warm, met his request with an amiable but exhausted smile.

"Don't you think six lemonades in one day too many?" she asked anxiously, when she had shaken hands with Ordway.

"But this strange dizziness, my dear? An iced drink, I find far more effective than a bandage."

"Very well, I'll make it of course, if it gives you any relief," replied his wife, wondering if she would be able to bake the bread by the time Beverly demanded supper. "If you'll come up stairs now, Mr. Smith," she added, "Malviny will show you to the blue room."

Malviny, who proved upon further acquaintance to be the eldest great-grandchild of Aunt Mehitable, descended like a hawk upon his waiting property, while Mrs. Brooke led the procession up the staircase to an apartment upon the second floor.

The blue room, as he discovered presently, contained a few rather fine pieces of old mahogany, a grandfather's chair, with a freshly laundered chintz cover, and a rag carpet made after the "log cabin" pattern. Of the colour from which it had taken its name, there was visible only a faded sampler worked elaborately in peacock blue worsteds, by one "Margaret, aged nine." Beyond this the walls were bare of decoration, though an oblong streak upon the plaster suggested to Ordway that a family portrait had probably been removed in the hurried preparations for his arrival.

After remarking that she hoped he would "make himself quite at home," Mrs. Brooke was glancing inquiringly about the room with her large, pale, rather prominent eyes, when a flash of purple in the doorway preceded the announcement that "Marse Beverly done turn right green wid de dizziness, en wus axin' kinder faintlike fur his lemonade."

"My poor husband," explained the exhausted wife, "contracted a chronic heart trouble in the War, and he suffers so patiently that at times we are in danger of forgetting it."

Pressing her aching head, she hurried downstairs to prepare Beverly's drink, while Ordway, after closing the broken latch of the door, walked slowly up and down the large, cool, barely furnished room. After his cramped chamber at Mrs. Twine's his eyes rested with contentment upon the high white ceiling overhead, and then descended leisurely to the stately bedstead, with its old French canopy above, and to the broad, red brick hearth freshly filled with odorous boughs of cedar. The cleanly quiet of the place restored to him at once the peace which he had missed in the last few days in Tappahannock, and his nerves, which had revolted from Mrs. Twine's scolding voice and slovenly table, became composed again in the ample space of these high white walls. Even "Margaret, aged nine," delivered a soothing message to him in the faded blues of her crewel work.

When he had unpacked his bag, he drew the chintz-covered chair to the window, and leaning his elbow on the sill, looked out gratefully upon the overgrown

lawn filled with sheepmint and clover. Though it was already twilight under the cedars, the lawn was still bright with sunshine, and beyond the dwindling clump of cabbage roses in the centre, he saw that the solitary cow had not yet finished her evening meal. As he watched her, his ears caught the sound of light footsteps on the porch below, and a moment afterward, he saw Emily pass from the avenue to the edge of the lawn, where she called the cow by name in a caressing voice. Lifting her head, the animal started at a slow walk through the tangled weeds, stopping from time to time to bite a particularly tempting head of purple clover. As the setting sun was in Emily's eyes, she raised her bared arm while she waited, to shield her forehead, and Ordway was struck afresh by the vigorous grace which showed itself in her slightest movement. The blue cotton dress she wore, which had shrunk from repeated washings until it had grown scant in the waist and skirt, revealed the firm rounded curve of her bosom and her slender hips. Standing there in the faint sunshine against the blue-black cedars, he felt her charm in some mysterious way to be akin to the beauty of the hour and the scene. The sight of her blue gown was associated in his mind with a peculiar freshness of feeling—an intensified enjoyment of life.

When the cow reached her side, the girl turned back toward the barnyard, and the two passed out of sight together beyond the avenue. As he followed them with his gaze, Ordway had no longer any thought of Gus Wherry, or of his possible presence

in Tappahannock upon the morrow. The evil association was withdrawn now from his consciousness, and in its place he found the tranquil pleasure which he had felt while he watched the sunshine upon the sheepmint and clover—a pleasure not unlike that he had experienced when Emily's blue cotton dress was visible against the cedars. The faces of the men who had listened to him yesterday returned to his memory; and as he saw them again seated on the rude benches among the pines, his heart expanded in an emotion which was like the melting of his will into the Divine Will which contained and enveloped all.

A knock at the door startled him back to his surroundings, and when he went to answer it, he found the small frightened servant standing outside, with an old serving tray clutched desperately to her bosom. From her excited stutter he gathered that supper awaited him upon the table, and descending hastily, he found the family already assembled in the dining-room. Beverly received him graciously, Emily quietly, and the children assured him enthusiastically that they were glad he had come to stay because now they might eat ham every night. When they had been properly suppressed by Emily, her brother took up the conversation which he carried on in a polite, rambling strain that produced upon Ordway the effect of a monologue delivered in sleep.

"I hope the birds won't annoy you at daybreak, Mr. Smith," he remarked, "the ivy at your windows harbours any number of wrens and sparrows."

"Oh, I like them," replied Ordway, "I've been sleeping under a tin roof in Tappahannock which no intelligent bird or human being would approach."

"I remember," said Mr. Beverly pensively, "that there was a tin roof on the hotel at Richmond I stayed at during the War when I first met my wife. Do you recall how very unpleasant that tin roof was, Amelia? Or were you too young at the time to notice it? You couldn't have been more than fifteen, I suppose? Yes, you must have been sixteen, because I remember when I marched past the door with my regiment, I noticed you standing on the balcony, in a long white dress, and you couldn't have worn long dresses before you were sixteen."

Mrs. Brooke glanced up calmly from the coffee-pot.

"The roof was slate," she remarked with the rigid adherence to a single idea, which characterised her devoted temperament.

"Ah, to be sure, it was slate," admitted Beverly, turning his genial face upon Ordway, "and I remember now it wasn't the roof that was unpleasant, but the food—the food was very unpleasant indeed, was it not, Amelia?"

"I don't think we ever got enough of it to test its quality," replied Mrs. Brooke, "poor mama was so reduced at the end of a month that she had to take up three inches of her bodice."

"It's quite clear to me now," observed Beverly, delightedly, "it was not that the food was unpleasant, but that it was scarce—very scarce."

He had finished his supper; and when he had risen from the table with his last amiable words, he proceeded to install himself, without apparent selection, into the only comfortable chair which the room contained. Drawing out his pipe a moment afterward, he waved Ordway, with a hospitable gesture, to a stiff wooden seat, and invited him in a persuasive tone, to join him in a smoke.

"My tobacco is open to you," he observed, "but I regret to say that I am unable to offer you a cigar. Yet a cigar, I maintain, is the only form in which a gentleman should use tobacco."

Ordway took out the leather case he carried and offered it to him with a smile.

"I'm afraid they are not all that they might be," he remarked, as Beverly supplied himself with a murmured word of thanks.

Mrs. Brooke brought out her darning, and Emily, after disappearing into the pantry, sent back the small servant for the dishes. The girl did not return again before Ordway took his candle from the mantelpiece and went upstairs; and he remembered after he had reached his bedroom that she had spoken hardly two words during the entire evening. Had she any objection, he asked himself now, to his presence in the household? Was it possible, indeed, that Mrs. Brooke should have taken him in against her sister-in-law's inclination, or even without her knowledge? In the supposition there was not only embarrassment, but a sympathetic resentment; and he resolved that if such proved to be the case, he was

in honour bound to return immediately to Tappahannock. Then he remembered the stifling little room under the tin roof with a feeling of thankfulness for at least this one night's escape.

Awaking at dawn he lay for a while contentedly listening to the flutter of the sparrows in the ivy, and watching the paling arch of the sky beyond the pointed tops of the cedars. A great peace seemed to encompass him at the moment, and he thought with gratitude of the quiet evening he had spent with Beverly. It was dull enough probably, when one came to think of it, yet the simple talk, the measured courtesies, returned to him now as a part of the pleasant homeliness of his surroundings. The soft starlight on the sheepmint and clover, the chirp of the small insects in the trees, the refreshing moisture which had crept toward him with the rising dew, the good-night kisses of the children, delivered under protest and beneath Mrs. Brooke's eyes—all these trivial recollections were attended in his thoughts by a train of pensive and soothing associations.

Across the hall he heard the soft opening and closing of a door, and immediately afterward the sound of rapid footsteps growing fainter as they descended the staircase. Already the room was full of a pale golden light, and as he could not sleep again because of the broken shutter to the window which gave on the lawn, he rose and dressed himself with an eagerness which recalled the early morning risings of his childhood. A little later when he went downstairs, he found that the front door was still

barred, and removing the heavy iron fastenings, he descended the steps into the avenue, where the faint sunbeams had not yet penetrated the thick screen of boughs. Remembering the garden, while he stood watching the sunrise from the steps, he turned presently into the little footpath which led by the house, and pushing aside the lilacs, from which the blossoms had all dropped, he leaned on the swinging gate before the beds he had spaded on those enchanted nights. Now the rank weeds were almost strangling the plants, and it occurred to him that there was still work ready for his hand in the Brooke's garden. He was telling himself that he would begin clearing the smothered rows as soon as his morning at the warehouse was over, when the old hound ran suddenly up to him, and turning quickly he saw Emily coming from the springhouse with a print of golden butter in her hand.

"So it was you I heard stirring before sunrise!" he exclaimed impulsively, as his eyes rested on her radiant face, over which the early mist had scattered a pearly dew like the fragrant moisture upon a rose.

"Yes, it was I. At four o'clock I remembered there was no butter for breakfast, so I got up and betook myself to the churn."

"And this is the result?" he asked, glancing down at the delicious creamy mould she had just worked into shape and crowned with a printed garland of thistles. "It makes me hungry enough for my muffins upon the minute."

"You shall have them shortly," she said, smiling, "but do you prefer pop-overs or plain?"

He met the question with serious consideration.

"Well, if the choice is mine I think I'll have pop-overs," he replied.

Before his unbroken gravity her quick humour rippled forth.

"Then I must run to Aunt Mehitable," she responded merrily, "for I suspect that she has already made them plain."

With a laughing nod she turned from him, and following the little path entered the house under the honeysuckle arbour on the back porch.

## CHAPTER IV

### Shows That a Laugh Does not Heal a Heartache

When Emily entered the dining-room, she found that Beverly had departed from his usual custom sufficiently to appear in time for breakfast.

"I hardly got a wink of sleep last night, my dear," he remarked, "and I think it was due entirely to the heavy supper you insisted upon giving us."

"But, Beverly, we must have hot things now," said Emily, as she arranged the crocheted centre-piece upon the table. "Mr. Smith is our boarder, you know, not our guest."

"The fact that he is a boarder," commented Beverly, with dignity, "entirely relieves me of any feeling of responsibility upon his account. If he were an invited guest in the house, I should feel as you do that hot suppers are a necessity, but when a man pays for the meals he eats, we are no longer under an obligation to consider his preferences."

"His presence in the household is a great trial to us all," observed his wife, whose attitude of general acceptance was modified by the fact that she accepted everything for the worst. Her sense of tragic values had been long since obliterated by a gray wash of melancholy that covered all.

"Well, I don't see that he is very zealous about interfering with us," remarked Emily, almost indignantly, "he doesn't appear to be of a particularly sociable disposition."

"Yes, I agree with you that he is unusually depressing," rejoined Mrs. Brooke. "It's a pity, perhaps, that we couldn't have secured a blond person—they are said to be of a more sanguine temperament, and I remember that the blond boarder at Miss Jennie Colton's, when I called there once, was exceedingly lively and entertaining. But it's too late, of course, to give advice now; I can only hope and pray that his morals, at least, are above reproach."

As the entire arrangement with Baxter had been made by Mrs. Brooke herself upon the day that Wilson, the grocer, had sent in his bill for the fifth time, Emily felt that an impatient rejoinder tripped lightly upon her tongue; but restraining her words with an effort, she observed cheerfully an instant later that she hoped Mr. Smith would cause no inconvenience to the family.

"Well, he seems to be a respectable enough person," admitted Beverly, in his gracious manner, "but, of course, if he were to become offensively presuming it would be a very simple matter to drop him a hint."

"It reminds me of a case I read of in the newspaper a few weeks ago," said Mrs. Brooke, "where a family in Roanoke took a stranger to board with them and shortly afterward were all poisoned by a powder in the soup. No, they weren't *all* poisoned," she

corrected herself thoughtfully, "for I am positive now that the boarder was the only one who died. It was the cook who put the poison into the soup and the boarder who ate all of it. I remember the Coroner remarked at the inquest that he had saved the lives of the entire family."

"All the same I hope Mr. Smith won't eat all the soup," observed Emily.

"It terrifies me at times," murmured Amelia, "to think of the awful power that we place so carelessly in the hands of cooks."

"In that case, my dear, it might be quite a safeguard always to have a boarder at the table," suggested Beverly, with his undaunted optimism.

"But surely, Amelia," laughed Emily, "you can't suppose that after she has lived in the family for seventy years, Aunt Mehitable would yield at last to a passing temptation to destroy us?"

"I imagine the poor boarder suspected nothing while he ate his soup," returned Mrs. Brooke. "No, I repeat that in cases like that no one is safe, and the only sensible attitude is to be prepared for anything."

"Well, if I'm to be poisoned, I think I'd prefer to take it without preparation," rejoined Emily. "There is Mr. Smith now in the hall, so we may as well send Malviny to bring in breakfast."

When Ordway entered an instant later with his hearty greeting, even Mrs. Brooke unbent a trifle from her rigid melancholy and joined affably in the conversation. By a curious emotional paradox she was able to enjoy him only as an affliction; and his

presence in the house had served as an excuse for a continuous parade of martyrdom. From the hour of his arrival, she had been perfectly convinced not only that he interfered with her customary peace of mind, but that he prevented her as surely from receiving her supply of hot water upon rising and her ordinary amount of food at dinner.

But as the days went by he fell so easily into his place in the family circle that they forgot at last to remark either his presence or his personal peculiarities. After dinner he would play his game of dominoes with Beverly in the breezy hall, until the sunlight began to slant across the cedars, when he would go out into the garden and weed the overgrown rows. Emily had seen him but seldom alone during the first few weeks of his stay, though she had found a peculiar pleasure in rendering him the small domestic services of which he was quite unconscious. How should he imagine that it was her hand that arranged the flowers upon his bureau, that placed his favourite chair near the window, and that smoothed the old-fashioned dimity coverlet upon his bed. Still less would he have suspected that the elaborate rag carpet upon his floor was one which she had contributed to his comfort from her own room. Had he known these things he would probably have been melancholy enough to have proved congenial company even to Mrs. Brooke, though, in reality, there was, perhaps, nothing he could have offered Emily which would have exceeded the pleasure she now found in these simple services. Ignorant as she was in all worldly

matters, in grasping this essential truth, she had stumbled unawares upon the pure philosophy of love—whose satisfaction lies, after all, not in possession, but in surrender.

She was still absorbed in the wonder of this discovery, when going out into the garden one afternoon to gather tomatoes for a salad, she found him working among the tall, green corn at the end of the long walk. As he turned toward her in the late sunshine, which slanted across the waving yellow tassels, she noticed that there was the same eager, youthful look in his face that she had seen on the night when she had come down to find him spading by the moonbeams.

In response to her smile he came out from among the corn, and went with her down the narrow space which separated two overgrown hills of tomato plants. He wore no coat and his striped cotton shirt was open at the throat and wrists.

"It's delicious in the corn now," he said; "I can almost fancy that I hear the light rustle along the leaves."

"You love the country so much that you ought to have been a farmer," she returned, "then you might have raised tobacco."

"That reminds me that I worked yesterday in your brother's crop—but it's too sticky for me. I like the garden better."

"Then you ought to have a garden of your own. Is all your chopping and your digging merely for the promotion of the general good?"

"Isn't it better so?" he asked, smiling, "particularly when I share in the results as I shall in this case? Who knows but that I shall eat this wonderful tomato to-night at supper?"

She took it from his hand and placed it on the lettuce leaves in the bottom of the basket upon her arm.

"You make a careful choice, I see," she observed, "it is a particularly fine one."

"I suppose your philosophy would insist that after plucking it I should demand the eating of it also?"

"I don't know about my philosophy—I haven't any—but my common sense would."

"I'm not sure," he returned half seriously, "that I have much opinion of common sense."

"But you would have," she commented gravely, "if you had happened to be born with Beverly for a brother. I used to think that all men were alike," she added, "but you don't remind me of Beverly in the very least."

As she spoke she turned her face slightly toward him, and still leaning over the luxuriant tomato row, looked up at him joyously with her sparkling eyes. Her breath came quickly and he saw her bosom rise and fall under the scant bodice of her blue cotton gown. Almost unconsciously he had drifted into an association with her which constituted for him the principal charm of his summer at Cedar Hill.

"On the other hand I've discovered many points of resemblance," he retorted in his whimsical tone.

"Well, you're both easy to live in the house with, I admit that."

"And we're both perfectly amiable as long as everybody agrees with us and nobody crosses us," he added.

"I shouldn't like to cross you," she said, laughing, "but then why should I? Isn't it very pleasant as it is now?"

"Yes, it is very pleasant as it is now," he repeated slowly.

Turning away from her he stood looking in silence over the tall corn to the amber light that fell beyond the clear outline of a distant hill. The association was, as she had just said, very pleasant in his thoughts, and the temptation he felt now was to drift on with the summer, leaving events to shape themselves as they would in the future. What harm, he demanded, could come of any relation so healthful, so simple as this?

"I used to make dolls of ears of corn when I was little," said Emily, laughing; "they were the only ones I had except those Beverly carved for me out of hickory nuts. The one with yellow tassels I named Princess Goldylocks until she began to turn brown and then I called her Princess Fadeaway."

At her voice, which sounded as girlish in his imagination as the voice of Alice when he had last heard it, he started and looked quickly back from the sunset into her face.

"Has it ever occurred to you," he asked, "how little—how very little you know of me? By you I

mean all of you, especially your brother and Mrs. Brooke."

Her glowing face questioned him for a moment.

"But what is knowledge," she demanded, "if it isn't just feeling, after all?"

"I wonder why under heaven you took me in?" he went on, leaving her words unanswered.

Had Mrs. Brooke stood in Emily's place, she would probably have replied quite effectively, "because the grocer's bill had come for the fifth time"; but the girl had learned to wear her sincerity in a less conspicuous fashion, so she responded to his question merely by a polite evasion.

"We have certainly had no cause to regret it," was what she said.

"What I wanted to say to you in the beginning and couldn't, was just this," he resumed, choosing his words with a deliberation which sounded strained and unnatural, "I suppose it can't make any difference to you—it doesn't really concern you, of course—that's what I felt—but," he hesitated an instant and then went on more rapidly, "my daughter's birthday is to-day. She is fifteen years old and it is seven years since I saw her."

"Seven years?" repeated Emily, as she bent over and carefully selected a ripe tomato.

"Doubtless I shouldn't know her if I were to pass her in the street," he pursued, after a minute. "But it's worse than that and it's harder—for it's as many years since I saw my wife."

She had not lifted her head from the basket, and

he felt suddenly that her stillness was not the stillness of flesh, but of marble.

"Perhaps I ought to have told you all this before," he went on again, "perhaps it wasn't fair to let you take me in in ignorance of this and of much else?"

Raising her head, she stood looking into his face with her kind, brown eyes.

"But how could these things possibly affect us?" she asked, smiling slightly.

"No," he replied slowly, "they didn't affect you, of course—they don't now. It made no difference to any of you, I thought. How could it make any?"

"No, it makes no difference to any of us," she repeated quietly.

"Then, perhaps, I've been wrong in telling you teis to-day?"

She shook her head. "Not in telling me, but," she drew a long breath, "it might be as well not to speak of it to Beverly or Amelia—at least for a while."

"You mean they would regret their kindness?"

"It would make them uncomfortable—they are very old-fashioned in their views. I don't know just how to put it, but it seems to them—oh, a terrible thing for a husband and wife to live apart."

"Well, I shan't speak of it, of course—but would it not be better for me to return immediately to Tappahannock?"

For an instant she hesitated. "It would be very dreadful at Mrs. Twine's."

"I know it," he answered, "but I'm ready to go back, this minute if you should prefer it."

"But I shouldn't," she rejoined in her energetic manner. "Why should I, indeed? It is much wiser for you to stay here until the end of the summer."

When she had finished he looked at her a moment without replying. The light had grown very faint and through the thin mist that floated up from the fields her features appeared drawn and pallid.

"What I can't make you understand is that even though it is all my fault—every bit my fault from the beginning—yet I have never really wanted to do evil in my heart. Though I've done wrong, I've always wanted to do right."

If she heard his words they made little impression upon her, for going out into the walk, she started, without speaking, in the direction of the house. Then, when she had moved a few steps from him, she stopped and looked back as if she had forgotten something that had been in her thoughts.

"I meant to tell you that I hope—I pray it will come right again," she said.

"I thank you," he answered, and drew back into the corn so that she might go on alone.

A moment later as Emily walked rapidly down the garden path, it seemed to her that the distance between the gate and the house covered an immeasurable space. Her one hope was that she might go to her room for at least the single hour before supper, and that there, behind a locked door with her head buried in the pillows, she might shed

the hot tears which she felt pressing against her eyelids.

Entering the hall, she had started swiftly up the staircase, with the basket of tomatoes still on her arm, when Mrs. Brooke intercepted her by descending like a phantom from the darkened bend.

"O Emily, I've been looking for you for twenty minutes," she cried in despairing tones. "The biscuits refused to rise and Aunt Mehitable is in a temper. Will you run straight out to the kitchen and beat up a few quick muffins for supper."

Drawing back into the corner of the staircase, Emily glanced down upon the tomatoes lying in the bottom of the basket; then without raising her eyes she spoke in a voice which might have uttered appropriately a lament upon the universal tragedy of her sex.

"I suppose I may as well make them plain?" she said.

## CHAPTER V

### Treats of a Great Passion in a Simple Soul

For several weeks in August Ordway did not go into Tappahannock, and during his vacation from the warehouse he made himself useful in a number of small ways upon the farm. The lawn was trimmed, the broken fences mended, the garden kept clear of wiregrass, and even Mrs. Brooke's "rockery" of portulaca, with which she had decorated a mouldering stump, received a sufficient share of his attention to cause the withered plants to grow green again and blossom in profusion. When the long, hot days had drawn to a close, he would go out with a watering-pot and sprinkle the beds of petunias and geraniums which Emily had planted in the bare spots beside the steps.

"The truth is I was made for this sort of thing, you know," he remarked to her one day. "If it went on forever I should never get bored or tired.'

Something candid and boyish in his tone caused her to look up at him quickly with a wondering glance. Since the confession of his marriage her manner to him had changed but little, yet she was aware, with a strange irritation against herself, that she never heard his voice or met his eyes without remembering instantly that he had a wife whom he had not seen

for seven years. The mystery of the estrangement was as great to her as it had ever been, for since that afternoon in the garden he had not referred again to the subject; and judging the marriage relation by the social code of Beverly and Amelia, she had surmised that some tremendous tragedy had been the prelude to a separation of so many years. As he lifted the watering-pot he had turned a little away from her, and while her eyes rested upon his thick dark hair, powdered heavily with gray above the temples, and upon the strong, sunburnt features of his profile, she asked herself in perplexity where that other woman was and if it were possible that she had forsaken him? "I wonder what she is like and if she is pretty or plain?" she thought. "I almost hope she isn't pretty, and yet it's horrid of me and I wonder why I hope so? What can it matter since he hasn't seen her for seven years, and if he ever sees her again, she will probably be no longer young. I suppose he isn't young, and yet I've never thought so before and somehow it doesn't seem to matter. No, I'm sure his wife is beautiful," she reflected a moment later, as a punishment for her uncharitable beginning, "and she has fair hair, I hope, and a lovely white skin and hands that are always soft and delicate. Yes, that is how it is and I am very glad," she concluded resolutely. And it seemed to her that she could see distinctly this woman whom she had imagined and brought to life.

"I can't help believing that you would tire of it in time," she said presently aloud.

"Do you tire of it?" he asked in a softened voice, turning his gaze upon her.

"I?" she laughed, with a bitterness he had never heard in her tone before, "oh, yes, but I suppose that doesn't count in the long run. Did there ever live a woman who hasn't felt at times like railing against the milk pans and denying the eternal necessity of ham and eggs?"

Though she spoke quite seriously the simplicity of her generalisation brought a humorous light to his eyes; and in his imagination he saw Lydia standing upon the white bearskin rug against the oval mirror and the gold-topped bottles upon her dressing-table.

"Well, if I'd made as shining a success at my job as you have at yours, I think I'd be content," was all he said.

She laughed merrily, and he saw that the natural sweetness of her temper was proof against idle imaginings or vain desires.

"You think then that it is better to do a small thing well than a big thing badly?" she inquired.

"But it isn't a small thing," he protested, "it's a great big thing—it's the very biggest thing of all."

A provoking smile quivered on her lips, and he saw the dimple come and go in her cheek.

"I am glad at least that you like my ham and eggs," she retorted mockingly.

"I do," he answered gravely, "I like your ham and eggs, but I admire your courage, also."

She shook her head. "It's the cheapest of the virtues."

"Not your kind, my dear child—it's the rarest and the costliest of achievements."

"Oh, I don't know how serious you are," she answered lightly, "but it's a little like putting a man on a desert island and saying, 'make your bed or lie on the rocks.' He's pretty apt to make his bed, isn't he?"

"Not in the least. He usually puts up a flag of distress and then sits down in the sand and looks out for a ship."

Her voice lost its merriment. "When my ship shows on the horizon, it will be time enough to hoist my flag."

A reply was on his lips, but before he could utter it, she had turned away and was moving rapidly across the lawn to the house.

The next morning Ordway went into Tappahannock, not so much on account of the little business he found awaiting him at the warehouse, as urged by the necessity of supplying Beverly with cigars. To furnish Beverly three times a day with the kind of cigar he considered it "worth while for a gentleman to smoke"—even though his choice fell, in Ordway's opinion, upon a quite inferior brand—had become in the end a courtesy too extravagant for him to contemplate with serenity. Yet he knew that almost in spite of himself this tribute to Beverly was now an established fact, and that as long as he remained at Cedar Hill he would continue to supply with eagerness the smoke which Beverly would accept with affability.

The town was dull enough at mid August, he remembered from the blighting experience of last summer; and now, after a fierce drought which had swept the country, he saw the big, fan-shaped leaves on Mrs. Twine's evening glory hanging like dusty rags along the tin roof of the porch. Banks was away, Baxter was away, and the only acquaintance he greeted was Bill Twine, sitting half drunk, in his shirt sleeves and collarless, on the front steps. There was positive relief when, at the end of an hour, he retraced his steps, with Beverly's cigars under his right arm.

After this the summer declined slowly into autumn, and Ordway began to count the long golden afternoons as they dropped one by one into his memory of Cedar Hill. An appeal to Mrs. Brooke, whom he had quite won over by his attentions to Beverly and the children, delayed his moving back into Tappahannock until the beginning of November, and he told himself with satisfaction that it would be possible to awake on frosty October mornings and look out upon the red and gold of the landscape.

Late in September Banks returned from his vacation, and during his first visit to Cedar Hill, he showed himself painfully nervous and ill at ease. But coming out for a walk with Ordway one afternoon, he suggested at the end of their first mile that they should sit down and have a smoke beneath a young cherry tree upon the roadside. As he lit his pipe he held the match in his hand until it burned his fingers; then throwing it into the grass, he turned

upon his companion as eloquently despairing a look as it is in the power of a set of naturally cheerful features to assume.

"Smith," he asked in a hollow voice, "do you suppose it's really any worse to die by your own hand than by disease?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Ordway, and the moment afterward, "Come, now, out with it, Banks. How has she been behaving this time?"

Banks lowered his voice, while he glanced suspiciously up at the branches of the cherry tree beneath which they sat.

"She hates the sight of me," he answered, with a groan.

"Nonsense," rejoined Ordway, cheerfully. "Love has before now worn the mask of scorn."

"But it hasn't worn the mask of boredom," retorted the despairing Banks.

For a minute his answer appeared final even to Ordway, who stared blankly over the ripened cornfield across the road, without, for the life of him, being able to frame a single encouraging sentence in reply.

"If it's the last word I speak," pursued Banks, biting desperately at the stem of his pipe, "she cannot abide the sight of me."

"But how does she show it?" demanded Ordway, relieved that he was not expected to combat the former irrefutable statement.

"She tried to keep me away from the springs where she went, and when I would follow her, whether or

no, she hardly opened her mouth to me for the first two days. Then if I asked her to go to walk she would say it was too hot for walking, and if I asked her to drive she'd answer that she didn't drive with men. As if she and I hadn't been together in a dog-cart over every road within twenty miles of Tappahannock!"

"But perhaps the custom of the place was different?"

"No, sir, it was not custom that kept her," replied Banks, in a bitterness that scorned deception, "for she went with others. It was the same thing about dancing, too, for if I asked her to dance, she would always declare that she didn't have the strength to use her fan, and the minute after I went away, I'd see her floating round the ball-room in somebody else's arms. Once I did get her to start, but she left off after the first round, because, she said, we could not keep in step. And yet I'd kept in step with her ever since we went on roller skates together."

He broke off for an instant, knocked the cold ashes out of his pipe, and plucking a long blade of grass, began chewing it nervously as he talked.

"And yet if you could only have seen her when she came down to the ball-room in her white organdie and blue ribbons," he exclaimed presently, in an agony of recollection.

"Well, I'm rather glad on the whole that I didn't," rejoined Ordway.

"You'd have fallen in love with her if you had—you couldn't have helped it."

"Then, thank heaven, I escaped the test. It's a pretty enough pickle as it is now."

"I could have stood it all," said Banks, "if it hadn't been for the other man. She might have pulled every single strand of my hair out if she'd wanted to, and I'd have grit my teeth and pretended that I liked it. I didn't care how badly she treated me. What hurt me was how well she treated the other man."

"Did she meet him for the first time last summer?" asked Ordway.

"Oh no, she's known him ever since she went North in the spring—but it's worse now than it's ever been and, upon my word, she doesn't seem to have eyes or ears for anybody else."

"So you're positive she means to marry him?"

"She swears she doesn't—that it's only fun, you know. But in my heart I believe it is as good as settled between them."

"Well, if she's made up her mind to it, I don't, for the life of me, see how you're going to stop her," returned Ordway, smiling.

"But a year ago she'd made up her mind to marry me," groaned Banks.

"If she's as variable as that, my dear boy, perhaps the wind will blow her heart back to you again."

"I don't believe she's got one," rejoined Banks, with the merciless dissection of the pure passion; "I sometimes think that she hasn't any more heart than—than—I don't know what."

"In that case I'd drag myself together and let her

alone. I'd go back to my work and resolve never to give her another thought."

"Then," replied Banks, "you might have all the good sense that there is in the business, but you wouldn't be in love. Now I love her for what she is, and I don't want her changed even if it would make her kinder. When she used to be sweet I thought sweetness the most fascinating thing on earth, and now that she bangs me, I've come to think that banging is."

"I begin to understand," remarked Ordway, laughing, "why you are not what might be called a successful lover."

"It isn't because I don't know the way," returned Banks gloomily, "it's because I can't practice it even after I've planned it out. Don't I lie awake at night making up all sorts of speeches I'm going to say to her in the morning? Oh, I can be indifferent enough when I'm dressing before the mirror—I've even put on a purple cravat because she hated it, but I've always taken it off again before I went downstairs to breakfast. Then as soon as I lay my eyes upon her, I feel my heart begin to swell as if it would burst out of my waistcoat, and instead of the flippant speeches I've planned, I crawl and whimper just as I did the day before."

They were seated under a cherry tree by the side of the road which led to Tappahannock, and as Banks finished his confessions, a large, dust covered buggy was seen approaching them from the direction of the town. As Ordway recognised Baxter through

the cloud of dust raised by the wheels, he waved his hat with a shout of welcome, and a minute later the buggy reached them and drew up in the patch of briars upon the roadside.

"I was just on my way to see you, Smith," said Baxter, as he let fall the reins and held out his great dirty hand, "but I'm too heavy to get out, and if I once sat down on the ground, I reckon it would take more than the whole of Tappahannock to pull me up again."

"Well, go ahead to Cedar Hill," suggested Ordway, "and we'll follow you at a brisk walk."

"No, I won't do that. I can say what I have got to say right here over the wheel, if you'll stand awhile in the dust. Major Leary was in to see me again this morning, and the notion he's got in his head now is that you're the man to run for Mayor of Tappahannock."

"I!" exclaimed Ordway, drawing back slightly as he spoke. "He forgets that I'm out of the question. I refuse, of course."

"Well, you see, he says you're the only man we've got strong enough to defeat Jasper Trend—and he's as sure as shot that you'd have something like a clean walk-over. He's already drawn up a big red flag with 'The People's Candidate: Ten Commandment Smith, 'upon it. I asked him why he wouldn't put just plain 'Daniel,' but he said that little Biblical smack alone was worth as much as a bushel of votes to you. If you drew the line at 'Ten Commandment' he's going to substitute 'Daniel-in-the-Lions'-Den Smith' or something of that kind."

"Tell him to stop it," broke in Ordway, with a smothered anger in his usually quiet voice, "he's said nothing to me about it, and I decline it absolutely and without consideration!"

"You mean you won't run?" inquired Baxter, in astonishment.

"I mean I won't run—I can't run—put it any way you please."

"I thought you'd put your whole heart and soul into defeating Trend."

"I have, but not that way—where's Trenton whom we've been talking of all summer?"

"He's out of it—consumption, the doctor says—anyway he's going South."

"Then there's but one other man," said Ordway, decisively, "and that's Baxter."

"Me?" said Baxter softly, "you mean me, do you say?" His chuckle shook the buggy until it creaked upon its rusty wheels. "I can't," he added, with a burst of humour, "to tell the truth I'm afraid."

"Afraid?" repeated Ordway, "you're afraid of Jasper Trend?"

"No," said Baxter, "it ain't Jasper—it's my wife."

He winked slowly as he caught Ordway's eyes, and then picking up the reins, made a movement as if to turn back to Tappahannock. "So you're dead sure then that you can't be talked over?" he asked.

"As sure as you are," returned Ordway promptly; then as the buggy started back in the direction from which it had come, he went over to Banks, who had

risen to his feet and was leaning heavily against the cherry tree, with the long blade of grass still between his teeth.

"What do you think of their wanting to make me Mayor, Banks?" he inquired, with a laugh.

Banks started from his gloomy reverie. "Mayor!" he exclaimed almost with animation. "Why, they 've shown jolly good sense, that 's what I think!"

"Well, you need n't begin to get excited," responded Ordway, "for I did n't accept, and you won't have to quarrel either with me or with Jasper Trend."

"There 's one thing you may be sure of." said Banks with energy, "and that is that I 'd quarrel with Jasper every time."

"In spite of Milly?" laughed Ordway.

"In spite of Milly," repeated Banks in an awed but determined voice; "she may manage my hair and my cravats and my life to come, but I'll be darned if she 's going to manage my vote!"

"All the same I 'm glad you can honestly stick to Jasper," said Ordway, "he counts on you now, does n't he?"

"Oh, I suppose so," returned Banks, without enthusiasm; "at any rate, I think he 'd rather she 'd marry me than Brown."

There was a moment's silence in which the name brought no association into Ordway's consciousness. Then in a single flashing instant the truth leaped upon him, and the cornfields across the road surged up to meet his eyes like the waves of a high sea.

"Than whom?" he demanded in so loud a tone

that Banks fell back a step and looked at him with blinking eyelids.

"Than marry whom?" asked Ordway for the second time, dropping his voice almost to a whisper before the blank surprise in the other's face.

"Oh, his name 's Brown—Horatio Brown—I thought I 'd told you," answered Banks, and he added a moment later, "you 've met him, I believe."

"Yes," said Ordway, with an effort, "he 's the handsome chap who came here last June, is n't he?"

"Oh, he 's handsome enough," admitted Banks, and he groaned out presently. "You liked him, did n't you?"

Ordway smiled slightly as he met the desperation in the other's look.

"I like him," he answered quietly, "as much as I like a toad."

## CHAPTER VI

### In Which Baxter Plots

When Baxter reached the warehouse the following morning, he found Major Leary pacing restlessly back and forth under the brick archway, with the regular military step at which, during the four years' war, he had marched into battle.

"Come in, sir, come in and sit down," said Baxter, leading the way into his office, and sweeping a pile of newspapers from an armchair with a hospitable gesture.

"Have you seen Smith? and is he all right?" were the Major's first words, as he placed his hat upon the table and took a quick, impatient turn about the room before throwing himself into the chair which the other had emptied. He was a short, erect, nervous man, with a fiery face, a pair of small gray eyes, like steel points, and a long white moustache, discoloured where it overhung his mouth by the faint yellow stain of tobacco.

"Oh, I 've see him," answered Baxter in a soothing voice, "but he won 't run—there's no use talking. He 's dead set against it."

"Won't run?" cried the Major, furiously. "Nonsense, sir, he must run. There 's no help for it. Did you tell him that we 'd decided that he should run?"

"I told him," returned Baxter, "but, somehow, it did n't look as if he were impressed. He was so positive that he would not even let me put in a word more on the subject. 'Are you dead sure, Smith?' I said, and he answered, 'I 'm as dead sure as you are yourself, Baxter.' "

The Major crossed his knees angrily, stretched himself back in his chair, and began pulling nervously at the ends of his moustache.

"Well, I 'll have to see him myself," he said authoritatively.

"You may see him as much as you please," replied Baxter, with a soft, offended dignity, "but I 'll be mightily surprised, sir, if you get him to change his mind."

"Well, I reckon you're right, Bob," admitted the other, after a moment's reflection, "what he won't do for you, it isn 't likely that he 'll do for the rest of Tappahannock—but the fact remains that somebody has got to step up and defeat Jasper Trend. Now I ask you pointblank—where 'll you get your man?"

"The Lord knows!" sighed Baxter, and he sucked hard at the stem of his pipe.

"Then I tell you if you can't make Smith come out, it 's your duty as an honest citizen to run yourself."

Baxter relapsed into a depressed silence, in the midst of which his thoughts were invaded not so much by the political necessity of the occasion as by the small, but dominant figure of his wife. The big man, who had feared neither shot nor bayonet, trembled in spirit as he imagined the outraged authority

that could express itself in a person that measured hardly a fraction more than five feet from her shoes to the curling gray fringe above her forehead. He remembered that once in the early days of his marriage, he had allowed himself to be seduced by the promise of political honours, and that for a whole miserable month he had gone without griddle cakes and syrup for his breakfast. "No—no, I could never tell Marthy," he thought, desperately, still seeing in imagination the pretty, indignant face of Mrs. Baxter.

"It 's your duty as an honest citizen to run yourself," repeated the Major, rapping the arm of his chair to enforce his words.

"I can't," rejoined Baxter, hopelessly, "I can't sir," and he added an instant afterward, "you see women have got the idea somehow, that politics ain't exactly moral."

"Women!" said the Major, in the dry, contemptuous tone in which he might have uttered the word, "Pshaw!"

"I don't mean just 'women,'" replied Baxter, "I mean my wife,"

"Oh!" said the Major, "you mean your wife would be opposed to the whole thing?"

"She would n't hear of it, sir, she simply would n't hear a word of it."

For a long pause the Major made no answer; then rising from his chair he began pacing with his military stride up and down the floor of the little room. At the end of five minutes he turned upon Baxter with

an exclamation of triumph, and threw himself again into the armchair beside the desk.

"I have it, Bob!" he said, slapping his knee until the dust flew out of his striped trousers, "I knew I 'd get it in the end and here it is. The very thing, on my word, sir, I 've discovered the very thing."

"Then I 'm out of it," said Baxter, "an' I 'm mighty glad of that."

"Oh, no, you aren 't out of it—not just yet," said the Major, "we 're to start you in, Bob, you 're to start in as a candidate; and then a week before the nomination, something will crop up to make you fall out of the race, and you 'll turn over all your votes to Smith. It would be too late, then, for him to back out—he 'd simply have to keep in to save the day."

In spite of the roar of delight with which the Major ended his speech, Baxter sat unconvinced and unmoved, shaking his great head in a voiceless protest against the plot.

"It 's the only way, I tell you," urged the Major, half pleased, half angry. "After Smith you 're by long odds the most popular man in Tappahannock, and if it is n't one of you, it 's Jasper Trend and his everlasting barrooms."

"But suppose Smith still declines," said Baxter, remembering his wife.

"Oh, he won't—he is n't a blamed fool," returned the Major, "and if he does," he added impressively, "if he does I swear to you I 'll go into the race myself."

He held out his hand and Baxter grasped it in token of good faith.

"Then I 'll do it," said the big man, "provided—" he hesitated, cleared his throat, and went on bravely, "provided there 's no objection to my telling my wife the scheme"—bending his ear an instant, he drew back with an embarrassed and guilty face, "that 's Smith's step in the warehouse. He 'll be in here in less than two minutes."

The Major took up his hat, and flung back the door with a hurried movement.

"Well, good-bye, I 'll see Smith later about the plans," he returned, "and meanwhile, we 'll go hard to work to whip our friend Jasper."

Meeting Ordway an instant later upon the threshold, he passed him with a flourish of his hat, and marched rapidly under the brick archway out into the street.

As his bookkeeper entered Baxter appeared to be absorbed in a newspaper which he had picked up hastily from the pile upon the floor.

"Good-morning," said Ordway, a little surprised; "it looks as if I 'd put the fiery Major to flight."

"Smith," said Baxter, dropping his paper, and lifting his big, simple face to the younger man, "Smith, you 've got me into a hole, and I want you to pull me out again."

"A hole?" repeated Ordway; then as light broke on him, he laughed aloud and held out his hand. "Oh, I see, he 's going to make you Mayor of Tappahannock!"

With a groan Baxter prodded fresh tobacco into his pipe, and applying a match, sat for several minutes brooding in silence amid the cloud of smoke.

"He says it 's got to be either you or me," he pursued presently, without noticing Ordway's ejaculation, "and on my word, Smith, seeing I 've got a wife who 's all against it, I think it would be but fair to me to let me off. You 're my friend now, ain't you? Well, I 'm asking you, Smith, as friend to friend."

A flush passed slowly over Ordway's face, and the unusual colour lent a peculiar animation to his glance. As Baxter met his eyes, he was conscious that they pierced through him, bright blue, sparkling, as incisive as a blade.

"To tell the truth, the thing is all but impossible," said Ordway, after a long pause. "You don't know, I suppose, that I 've never even touched politics in Tappahannock."

"That ain't the point, Smith—it 's going on three years since you came here—am I right?"

"Yes—three years next March, and it seems a century."

"Well, anyway, you 've as good a right as I to be Mayor, and a long sight better one than Jasper Trend has. Come, now, Smith, if you don't get me out of this hole I 'm in, heaven knows how I 'm going to face the Major."

"Give me time," said Ordway, quickly, "give me time—a week from to-morrow I am to make my first speech in the town hall. May I have till then?"

"Till Thursday week? Oh, I say, Smith, you 've got to give in in the end—and a week sooner or later, what 's the difference?"

Without replying, Ordway walked slowly to the window and stood looking out upon the steep street that crawled up from the railroad track, where an engine whistled. He had held out till now, but with Baxter's last words he had heard in his thoughts a question larger and older than any of which his employer had dreamed. "Why not?" he asked himself again as he looked out upon the sunshine. "Why should not Daniel Smith, for a good purpose, resume the rights which Daniel Ordway has forfeited?" And it appeared to him while he stood there that his decision involved not himself alone, and that the outcome had ceased to be merely an election to the highest office in Tappahannock. Infinitely deep and wide, the problem belonged not only to his individual life, but to the lives of all those who had sinned and paid the penalty of sin and asked of humanity the right and the freedom to begin anew. The impulsive daring which he had almost lived down stirred for an instant in his pulses, and turning quickly he looked at Baxter with a boyish laugh.

"If I go in, Baxter, I go in to win!" he cried.

At the moment it had seemed to him that he was obliging rather than ambitious in the choice that he had made; but several days later, when he came out of the warehouse to find the Major's red flag flying in the street, he felt the thrill of his youthful enthusiasm quicken in his blood. There was a strangely martial air about the red flag in the sunshine, and the response in his pulses was not unlike the ardour of battle.

"After all the world is no smaller here than it is in New York," he thought, "only the littleness of the one is different from the littleness of the other. In either place success would have meant nothing in itself, but in Tappahannock I can be more that successful, I can be useful." With the words it seemed to him that his heart dissolved in happiness, and as he looked now on the people who passed him in the street—on the old Negro midwife waddling down the board walk; on the Italian who kept a fruit stand at the corner; on the pretty girl flirting in the door of the harness shop; and on the rough-coated, soft-eyed country horses—he felt that one and all of these must recognise and respond to the goodwill that had overflowed his thoughts. So detached from personal bitterness, indeed, was even his fight against Jasper Trend that he went out of his way at the top of the hill to pick up a small whip which the Mayor had dropped from horseback as he rode by. The scowling thanks with which Jasper received the courtesy puzzled him for a moment until he remembered that by the man in the harness shop they were regarded probably as enemies. At the recollection he stopped short in his walk and laughed aloud—no, he was not interested in fighting anything so small, so insignificant as Jasper Trend. It was the injustice, the social disease he combated and not the man. "I wonder if he really hates me?" he thought, for it seemed to him absurd and meaningless that one man should waste his strength in hating another. "If he 'd been five years in prison

he would have learned how foolish it all is," he added; and an instant afterward he asked himself almost with terror if his punishment had been, in reality, the greatest good that had come to him in life? Without that terrible atonement would he have gone on like Jasper Trend from fraud to fraud, from selfishness to damnation?

Looking round him in the perfect October weather, he felt that the emotion in his heart swelled suddenly to rapture. Straight ahead the sunshine sifted in drops through the red and yellow trees that bordered the roadside, while in the field on his right the brown cornricks crowded in even rows to where the arch of the hill was outlined against the deep blue sky. Here was not only peace, but happiness, and his old life, as he glanced back upon it, appeared hollow, futile, a corpse without breath or animation. That was the mere outward form and body of existence; but standing here in the deserted road, with his eyes on the brilliant October fields, he could tell himself that he had come at last into the ways and the understanding of faith. As he had once walked by sight alone and stumbled, so he moved now blindly like a child that is led step by step through the dark.

From the road behind him a happy laugh struck on his ears, and turning quickly he saw that a dog-cart was rolling rapidly from Tappahannock. As he stepped back upon the roadside to avoid the dust raised by the wheels, he lifted his eyes to the face of Milly Trend, who sat, flushed and smiling, under

a pink sunshade. She bowed joyfully; and it was not until a moment afterward, when the cart had gone by, that Ordway realised, almost with the force of a blow struck unawares, that he had acknowledged the obsequious greeting of Gus Wherry.

After the pink sunshade had vanished, Milly's laugh was still blown back to him on the rising wind. With the happy sound of it in his ears, he watched the dust settle again in the road, the tall golden poplars close like a screen after the passing wheels, and the distance resume its aspect of radiant loneliness. Nothing was changed at which he looked, yet he was conscious that the rapture had passed from his thoughts and the beauty from the October landscape. The release that he had won appeared to him as an illusion and a cheat, and lifting his face to the sunshine, he watched, like a prisoner, the flight of the swallows across the sky.

At dinner Beverly noticed his abstraction, and recommended a mint julep, which Emily went out immediately to prepare.

"The blood is easily chilled at this season," he said, "and care should be taken to keep it warm by means of a gentle stimulant. I am not a great drinker, sir, as you may have remarked, but in cases either of sickness or sorrow, I have observed that few things are more efficacious than a thimbleful of whiskey taken at the proper time. When I had the misfortune to break to my uncle Colonel Algernon Brooke the distressing news of the death of his wife by drowning, I remember that, though he was one

of the most abstemious men alive, his first articulate words were: 'bring the whiskey jug.' "

Even with the cheering assistance of the mint julep, however, it was impossible for Ordway to eat his dinner; and making an excuse presently, he rose from the table and went out into the avenue, where he walked slowly up and down in the shadow of the cedars. At the end of his last restless turn, he went indoors for his hat, and coming out again started rapidly toward Tappahannock. With his first decisive step he felt that the larger share of his burden had fallen from him.

The Tappahannock Hotel was a low, whitewashed frame building, withdrawn slightly from the street, where several dejected looking horses, with saddle-bags attached to them, were usually fastened to the iron rings in the hitching-rail upon the sidewalk. The place was the resort chiefly of commercial travellers or of neighbouring farmers, who drove in with wagon loads of garden produce or of sun-cured tobacco; and the number of loungers reclining on the newly painted green benches upon the porch made Ordway aware that the fall trade was already beginning to show signs of life.

In answer to his questions, the proprietor an unctuous person, whose mouth was distorted by a professional habit of welcome—informed him that a gentleman by the name of Brown had registered there the evening before, and that he was, to the

best of his belief, upstairs in number eighteen at the present moment.

"To tell the truth I can't quite size him up," he concluded confidentially. "He don't seem to hev' come either to sell or to buy an' thar 's precious little else that ever brings a body to Tappahannock."

"Please add that I wish particularly to see him in private," said Ordway.

Without turning his head the proprietor beckoned, by a movement of his thumb delivered backward over his left shoulder, to a Negro boy, who sat surreptitiously eating peanuts out of a paper bag in his pocket.

"Tell the gentleman in number eighteen, Sol, that Mr. Smith, the people's candidate for Mayor, would like to have a little talk with him in private. I 'm mighty glad to see you out in the race, suh," he added, turning again to Ordway, as the Negro disappeared up the staircase.

"Thank you," replied Ordway, with a start, which brought him back from his approaching interview with Gus Wherry to the recollection that he was fighting to become the Mayor of Tappahannock.

"Thar 's obleeged to be a scrummage, I reckon," resumed the loquacious little man, when he had received Ordway's acknowledgments—"but I s'pose thar ain't any doubt as to who 'll come off with the scalps in the end." His manner changed abruptly, and he looked round with a lurking curiosity in his watery eyes. You knew Mr. Brown, did n't you say, suh?—before you came here?"

Ordway glanced up quickly.

"Did you tell me he got here yesterday?" he asked.

"Last night on the eight-forty-five, which came in two hours after time."

"An accident on the road, was n't it?"

"Wreck of a freight—now, Mr. Brown, as I was saying——"

At this instant, to Ordway's relief, the messenger landed with a bound on the floor of the hall, and picking himself up, announced with a cheerful grin, that "the gentleman would be powerful pleased to see Mr. Smith upstairs in his room."

Nodding to the proprietor, Ordway followed the Negro up to the first landing, and knocked at a half open door at the end of the long, dark hall.

## CHAPTER VII

### Shows That Politeness, Like Charity, Is an Elastic Mantle

When Ordway entered the room, he turned and closed the door carefully behind him, before he advanced to where Wherry stood awaiting him with outstretched hand.

"I can't begin to tell you how I appreciate the honour, Mr. Smith. I didn't expect it—upon my word, I didn't," exclaimed Wherry, with the effusive amiability which made Ordway bite his lip in anger.

"I don't know that I mean it for an honour, but I hope we can get straight to business," returned Ordway shortly.

"Ah, then there's business?" repeated the other, as if in surprise. "I had hoped that you were paying me merely a friendly call. To tell the truth I've the very worst head in the world for business, you know, and I always manage to dodge it whenever I get half a chance."

"Well, you can't dodge it this time, so we may as well have it out."

"Then since you insist upon that awful word 'business,' I suppose you mean that you've come formally to ratify the treaty?" asked Wherry, smiling.

"The treaty? I made no treaty," returned Ordway gravely.

Laughing pleasantly, Wherry invited his visitor to be seated. Then turning away for an instant, he flung himself into a chair beside a little marble topped table upon which stood a half-emptied bottle of rye whiskey and a pitcher of iced water on a metal tray.

"Do you mean to tell me you 've forgotten our conversation in that beastly road?" he demanded, "and the prodigal? Surely you haven't forgotten the prodigal? Why, I never heard anything in my life that impressed me more."

"You told me then distinctly that you had no intention of remaining in Tappahannock."

"I 'll tell you so again if you 'd like to hear it. Will you have a drink?"

Ordway shook his head with an angry gesture.

"What I want to know," he insisted bluntly, "is why you are here at all?"

Wherry poured out a drink of whiskey, and adding a dash of iced water, tossed it down at a swallow.

"I thought I told you then," he answered, "that I have a little private business in the town. As it 's purely personal I hope you 'll have no objection to my transacting it.

"You said that afternoon that your presence was, in some way, connected with Jasper Trend's cotton mills."

Wherry gave a low whistle. "Did I?" he asked politely, "well, perhaps, I did. I can't remember."

"I was fool enough to believe that you wanted an honest job," said Ordway; "it did not enter my head that your designs were upon Trend's daughter."

"Didn't it? "inquired Wherry with a smile in which his white teeth flashed brilliantly. "Well, it might have, for I was honest enough about it. Didn't I tell you that a woman was at the bottom of every mess I was ever in?"

"Where is your wife?" asked Ordway.

"Dead," replied Wherry, in a solemn voice.

"If I am not mistaken, you had not less than three at the time of your trial."

"All dead," rejoined Wherry in the same solemn tone, while he drew out his pocket handkerchief and wiped his eyes with a flourish, "there ain't many men that have supported such a treble affliction on the same day."

"I may as well inform you that I don't believe a word you utter."

"It 's true all the same. I 'll take my oath on the biggest Bible you can find in town."

"Your oath? Pshaw!"

"Well, I always said my word was better," observed Wherry, without the slightest appearance of offence. He wore a pink shirt which set off his fine colouring to advantage, and as he turned aside to pour out a second drink of whiskey, Ordway noticed that gis fair hair was brushed carefully across the bald spot in the centre of his head.

"Whether they are dead or alive," responded Ordway, "I want you to understand plainly that you are

to give up your designs upon Milly Trend or her money."

"So you 've had your eye on her yourself?" exclaimed Wherry. "I declare I 'm deuced sorry. Why, in thunder, didn't you tell me so last June?"

A mental nausea that was almost like a physical spasm seized Ordway suddenly, and crossing to the window, he stood looking through the half-closed shutters down into the street below, where a covered wagon rolled slowly downhill, the driver following on foot as he offered a bunch of fowls to the shopkeepers upon the sidewalk. Then the hot, stale, tobacco impregnated air came up to his nostrils, and he turned away with a sensation of disgust.

"If you 'd only warned me in time—hang it—I 'd have cut out and given you the field," declared Wherry in such apparent sincerity that Ordway resisted an impulse to kick him out into the hall. "That 's my way. I always like to play fair and square when I get the chance."

"Well, you 've got the chance now, and what 's more you 've got to make it good."

"And leave you the open?"

"And leave me Tappahannock—yes."

"I don't want Tappahannock. To tell the truth I 'm not particularly struck by its attractions."

"In that case you 've no objection to leaving immediately, I suppose?"

"I 've no objection on earth if you 'll allow me a pretty woman to keep me company. I 'm a deuced

lonely bird, and I can't get on by myself—it 's not in my nature."

Ordway placed his hand upon the table with a force which started the glasses rattling on the metal tray.

"I repeat for the last time that you are to leave Milly Trend alone," he said. "Do you understand me?"

"I'm not sure I do," rejoined Wherry, still pleasantly enough. "Would you mind saying that over again in a lower tone?"

"What I want to make plain is that you are not to marry Milly Trend—or any other women in this town," returned Ordway angrily.

"So there are others!" commented Wherry jauntily with his eye on the ceiling.

The pose of his handsome head was so remarkably effective, that Ordway felt his rage increased by the mere external advantages of the man.

"What I intend you to do is to leave Tappahannock for good and all this very evening," he resumed, drawing a sharp breath.

The words appeared to afford Wherry unspeakable amusement.

"I can't," he responded, after a minute in which he had enjoyed his humour to the full, "the train leaves at seven-ten and I 've an engagement at eight o'clock."

"You 'll break it, that 's all."

"But it would n't be polite—it 's with a lady."

"Then I 'll break it for you," returned Ordway,

starting toward the door, "for I may presume, I suppose, that the lady is Miss Trend?"

"Oh, come back, I say. Hang it all, don't get into a fury," protested Wherry, clutching the other by the arm, and closing the door which he had half opened. "Here, hold on a minute and let's talk things over quietly. I told you, didn't I? that I wanted to be obliging."

"Then you will go?" asked Ordway, in a milder tone.

"Well, I'll think about it. I've a quick enough wit for little things, but on serious matters my brain works slowly. In the first place now didn't we promise each other that we'd play fair?"

"But you haven't—that's why I came here."

"You're dead wrong. I'm doing it this very minute. I'll keep my mouth shut about you till Judgment Day if you'll just hold off and not pull me back when I'm trying to live honest."

"Honest!" exclaimed Ordway, and turned on his heel.

"Well, I'd like to know what you call it, for if it isn't honesty, it certainly isn't pleasure. My wife's dead, I swear it's a fact, and I swear again that I don't mean the girl any harm. I was never so much gone on a woman in my life, though a number of 'em have been pretty soft on me. So you keep off and manage your election—or whatever it is—while I go about my business. Great Scott! after all it ain't as if a woman were a bank note, is it?"

"The first question was mine. Will you leave today or will you not?"

"And if I will not what are you going to do about it?"

"As soon as I hear your decision, I shall let you know."

"Well, say I won't. What is your next move then?"

"In that case I shall go straight to the girl's father after I leave this room."

"By Jove you will! And what will you do when you get there?"

"I shall tell him that to the best of my belief you have a wife—possibly several—now living."

"Then you'll lie," said Wherry, dropping for the first time his persuasive tone.

"That remains to be proved," rejoined Ordway shortly. "At any rate if he needs to be convinced I shall tell him as much as I know about you."

"And how much," demanded Wherry insolently, "does that happen to be?"

"Enough to stop the marriage, that is all I want."

"And suppose he asks you—as he probably will—how in the devil it came to be any business of yours?"

For a moment Ordway looked over the whiskey bottle and through the open window into the street below.

"I don't think that will happen," he answered slowly, "but if it does I shall tell him the whole truth as I know it—about myself as well as about you."

"The deuce you will!" exclaimed Wherry. "It

appears that you want to take the whole job out of my hands now, doesn't it?"

The flush from the whiskey had overspread his face, and in the midst of the general redness his eyes and teeth flashed brilliantly in an angry laugh. An imaginative sympathy for the man moved Ordway almost in spite of himself, and he wondered, in the long pause, what Wherry's early life had been and if his chance in the world were really a fair one?

"I don't want to be hard on you," said Ordway at last; "it's out of the question that you should have Milly Trend, but if you'll give up that idea and go away I'll do what I can to help you—I'll send you half my salary for the next six months until you are able to find a job."

Wherry looked at him with a deliberate wink.

"So you'd like to save your own skin, after all, wouldn't you?" he inquired.

Taking up his hat from the table, Ordway turned toward the door and laid his hand upon the knob before he spoke.

"Is it decided then that I shall go to Jasper Trend?" he asked.

"Well, I wouldn't if I were you," said Wherry, "but that's your affair. On the whole I think that you'll pay more than your share of the price."

"It's natural, I suppose, that you should want your revenge," returned Ordway, without resentment, "but all the same I shall tell him as little as possible about your past. What I shall say is that I have reason to believe that your wife is still living."

"One or more?" enquired Wherry, with a sneer.

"One, I think, will prove quite sufficient for my purpose."

"Well, go ahead," rejoined Wherry, angrily, "but before you strike you'd better be pretty sure you see a snake in the grass. I'd advise you for your own sake to ask Milly Trend first if she expects to marry me."

"What?" cried Ordway, wheeling round, "do you mean she has refused you?"

"Oh, ask her—ask her," retorted Wherry airily, as he turned back to the whiskey bottle.

In the street, a moment later, Ordway passed under the red flag, which, inflated by the wind, swelled triumphantly above his head. From the opposite sidewalk a man spoke to him; and then, turning, waved his slouch hat enthusiastically toward the flag. "If he only knew," thought Ordway, looking after him; and the words brought to his imagination what disgrace in Tappahannock would mean in his life. As he passed the dim vacancy of the warehouse he threw toward it a look which was almost one of entreaty. "No, no, it can't be," he insisted, as if to reassure himself, "it is impossible. How could it happen?" And seized by a sudden rage against circumstances, he remembered the windy afternoon upon which he had come for the first time to Tappahannock—the wide stretches of broomsedge; the pale red road, which appeared to lead nowhere; his violent hunger; and the Negro woman who had given him the cornbread at the door of her cabin. A hundred years seemed to have passed since then—

no, not a hundred years as men count them, but a dissolution and a resurrection. It was as if his personality—his whole inner structure had dissolved and renewed itself again; and when he thought now of that March afternoon it was with the visual distinctness that belongs to an observer rather than to an actor. His point of view was detached, almost remote. He saw himself from the outside alone—his clothes, his face, even his gestures; and these thinge were as vivid to him as were the Negro cabin, the red clay road, and the covered wagon that threw its shadow on the path as it crawled by. In no way could he associate his immediate personality either with the scene or with the man who had sat on the pine bench ravenously eating the coarse food. At the moment it seemed to him that he was released, not only from any spiritual bondage to the past, but even from any physical connection with the man he had been then. "What have I to do with Gus Wherry or with Daniel Ordway?" he demanded. "Above all, what in heaven have I to do with Milly Trend?" As he asked the question he flushed with resentment against the girl for whom he was about to sacrifice all that he valued in his life. He thought with disgust of her vanity, her shallowness, her insincerity; and the course that he had planned showed in this sudden light as utterly unreasonable. It struck him on the instant that in going to Wherry he had been a fool. "Yes, I should have thought of that before. I have been too hasty, for what, after all, have I to do with Milly Trend?"

With an effort he put the question aside, and in the emotional reaction which followed, he felt that his spirit soared into the blue October sky. Emily, looking at him at dinner, thought that she had never seen him so animated, so light-hearted, so boyishly unreserved. When his game of dominoes with Beverly was over, he followed the children out into the orchard, where they were gathering apples into great straw hampers; and as he stood under the fragrant clustering boughs, with the childish laughter in his ears, he felt that his perplexities, his troubles, even his memories had dissolved and vanished into air. An irresponsible happiness swelled in his heart while he watched the golden orchard grass blown like a fringe upon the circular outline of the hill.

But when night fell the joy of the sunshine went from him, and it was almost with a feeling of heaviness that he lit his lamp and sat down in the chintz-covered chair under the faded sampler worked by Margaret, aged nine. Without apparent cause or outward disturbance he had passed from the exhilaration of the afternoon into a pensive, almost a melancholy mood. The past, which had been so remote for several hours, had leaped suddenly to life again—not only in his memory, but in every fibre of his body as well as in every breath he drew. "No, I cannot escape it, for is it not a part of me—it is I myself," he thought; and he knew that he could no more free himself from his duty to Milly Trend than he could tear the knowledge of her existence from his brain. "After all, it is not Milly Trend," he added, "it

is something larger, stronger, far more vital than she."

A big white moth flew in from the dusk, and fluttered blindly in the circle of light which the lamp threw on the ceiling. He heard the soft whirring of its wings against the plaster, and gradually the sound entered into his thoughts and became a part of his reflections. "Will the moth fall into the flame or will it escape?" he asked, feeling himself powerless to avert the creature's fate. In some strange way his own destiny seemed to be whirling dizzily in that narrow circle of light; and in the pitiless illumination that surrounded it, he saw not only all that was passed, but all that was present as well as all that was yet to come. At the same instant he saw his mother's face as she lay dead with her look of joyous surprise frozen upon her lips; and the face of Lydia when she had lowered a black veil at their last parting; and the face of Alice, his daughter; and of the girl downstairs as he had seen her through the gray twilight; and the face of the epileptic little preacher, who had preached in the prison chapel. And as these faces looked back at him he knew that the illumination in which his soul had struggled so blindly was the light of love. "Yes, it is love," he thought "and that is the meaning of the circle of light into which I have come out of the darkness."

He looked up startled, for the white moth, after one last delirious whirl of ecstasy, had dropped from the ceiling into the flame of the lamp.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Turn of the Wheel

At eight o'clock the next morning Ordway entered Jasper Trend's gate, and passed up the gravelled walk between borders of white and yellow chrysanthemums. In a window on his right a canary was singing loudly in a gilt cage; and a moment later, the maid invited him into a room which seemed, as he entered it, to be filled with a jubilant burst of music. As he waited here for the man he had come to see, he felt that, in spite of his terrible purpose, he had found no place in Tappahannock so cheerful as this long room flooded with sunshine, in the midst of which the canary swung back and forth in his wire cage. The furniture was crude enough, the colours of the rugs were unharmonious, the imitation lace of the curtains was offensive to his eyes. Yet the room was made almost attractive by the large windows which gave on the piazza, the borders of chrysanthemums and the smoothly shaven plot of lawn.

His back was turned toward the door when it opened and shut quickly, and Jasper Trend came in, hastily swallowing his last mouthful of breakfast.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Smith, I understand," he said at once, showing in his manner a mixture of curiosity and resentment. It was evident at the first

glance that even in his own house he was unable to overcome the political antagonism of the man of little stature. The smallest social amenity he would probably have regarded as a kind of moral subterfuge.

"I must ask you to overlook the intimate nature of my question," began Ordway, in a voice which was so repressed that it sounded dull and lifeless, "but I have heard that your daughter intends to marry Horatio Brown. Is this true?"

At the words Jasper, who had prepared himself for a political onslaught, fell back a step or two and stood in the merciless sunlight, blinking at his questioner with his little, watery, pale gray eyes. Each dull red vein in his long nose became suddenly prominent.

"Horatio Brown?" he repeated, "why, I thought you'd come about nothing less than the nomination. What in the devil do you want anyway with Horatio Brown. He can't vote in Tappahannock, can he?"

"I'll answer that in time," replied Ordway, "my motive is more serious than you can possibly realise—it is a question which involves your daughter's happiness—perhaps her life."

"Good Lord, is that so?" exclaimed Jasper, "I don't reckon you're sweet on her yourself, are you?"

Ordway's only reply was an impatient groan which sent the other stumbling back against a jar of goldfish on the centre table. Though he had come fully prepared for the ultimate sacrifice, he was unable to control the repulsion aroused in him by the bleared eyes and sunken mouth of the man before him.

"Well, if you ain't," resumed Jasper presently, with a fresh outburst of hilarity, "you're about the only male critter in Tappahannock that don't turn his eyes sooner or later toward my door."

"I've barely a speaking acquaintance with your daughter," returned Ordway shortly, "but her reputation as a beauty is certainly very well deserved."

Mollified by the compliment, Jasper unbent so far as to make an abrupt, jerky motion in the direction of a chair; but shaking his head, Ordway put again bluntly the question he had asked upon the other's entrance.

"Am I to understand seriously that she means to marry Brown?" he demanded.

Jasper twisted his scraggy neck nervously in his loose collar. "Lord, how you do hear things!" he ejaculated. "Now, as far as I can see, thar ain't a single word of truth in all that talk. Just between you and me I don't believe my girl has had her mind on that fellow Brown more'n a minute. I'm dead against it and that'll go a long way with her, you may be sure. Why, only this morning she told me that if she had to choose between the two of 'em, she'd stick to young Banks every time."

With the words it seemed to Ordway that the sunshine became fairly dazzling as it fell through the windows, while the song of the canary went up rapturously like a pæan. Only by the relief which flooded his heart like warmth could he measure the extent of the ruin he had escaped. Even Jasper Trend's face appeared no longer hideous to him, and as he held out his hand, the exhilaration of his release

lent a note that was almost one of affection to his voice.

"Don't let her do it—for God's sake don't let her do it," he said, and an instant afterward he was out on the gravelled walk between the borders of white and yellow chrysanthemums.

At the gate Milly was standing with a letter in her hand, and when he spoke to her, he watched her face change slowly to the colour of a flower. Never had she appeared softer, prettier, more enticing in his eyes, and he felt for the first time an understanding of the hopeless subjection of Banks.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Smith!" she exclaimed, smiling and blushing as she had smiled and blushed at Wherry the day before, "I was asking Harry Banks yesterday what had become of you?"

"What had become of me?" he repeated in surprise, while he drew back quickly with his hand on the latch of the gate.

"I hadn't seen you for so long," she answered, with a laugh which bore less relation to humour than it did to pleasure. "You used to pass by five times a day, and I got so accustomed to you that I really missed you when you went away."

"Well, I've been in the country all summer, though that hardly counts, for you were out of town yourself."

"Yes, I was out of town myself." She lingered over the words, and her voice softened as she went on until it seemed to flow with the sweetness of liquid honey, "but even when I am here, you never care to see me."

"Do you think so?" he asked gaily, and the next instant he wondered why the question had passed his lips before it had entered into his thoughts, "the truth is that I know a good deal more about you than you suspect," he added; "I have the honour, you see, to be the confidant of Harry Banks."

"Oh, Harry Banks!" she exclaimed indifferently, as she turned from the gate, while Ordway opened it and passed out into the street.

For the next day or two it seemed to him that the lightness of his heart was reflected in the faces of those about him—that Baxter, Mrs. Brooke, Emily, Beverly each appeared to move in response to some hidden spring within himself. He felt no longer either Beverly's tediousness or Mrs. Brooke's melancholy, for these early October mornings contained a rapture which transfigured the people with whom he lived.

With this unlooked for renewal of hope he threw himself eagerly into the political fight for the control of Tappanhannock. It was now Tuesday and on Thursday evening he was to deliver his first speech in the town hall. Already the preparations were made, already the flags were flying from the galleries, and already Baxter had been trimmed for his public appearance upon the platform.

"By George, I believe the Major's right and it's the Ten Commandment part that has done it," said the big man, settling his person with a shake in the new clothes he had purchased for the occasion. "I reckon this coat's all right, Smith, ain't it? My

wife wouldn't let me come out on the platform in those old clothes I've been wearing."

"Oh, you're all right," returned Ordway, cheerfully—so cheerfully that Baxter was struck afresh by the peculiar charm which belonged less to manner than to temperament, "you're all right, old man, but it isn't your clothes that make you so."

"All the same I'll feel better when I get into my old suit again," said Baxter, "I don't know how it is, but, somehow, I seem to have left two-thirds of myself behind in those old clothes. I just wore these down to show 'em off, but I shan't put 'em on again till Thursday."

It was the closing hour at the warehouse, and after a few eager words on the subject of the approaching meeting, Ordway left the office and went out into the deserted building where the old Negro was sweeping the floor with his twig broom. A moment later he was about to pass under the archway, when a man, hurrying in from the street, ran straight into his arms and then staggered back with a laugh of mirthless apology.

"My God, Smith," said the tragic voice of Banks, "I'm half crazy and I must have a word with you alone."

Catching his arm Ordway drew him into the dim light of the warehouse, until they reached the shelter of an old wagon standing unhitched against the wall. The only sound which came to them here was the scratching noise made by the twig broom on the rough planks of the floor.

"Speak now," said Ordway. while his heart sank as he looked into the other's face, "It's quite safe—there's no one about but old Abraham."

"I can't speak," returned Banks, preserving with an effort a decent composure of his features, "but it's all up with me—it's worse than I imagined, and there's nothing ahead of me but death."

"I suppose it's small consolation to be told that you look unusually healthy at the minute," replied Ordway, "but don't keep me guessing, Banks. What's happened now?"

"All her indifference—all her pretence of flirting was pure deception," groaned the miserable Banks, "she wanted to throw dust, not only in my eyes, but in Jasper's, also."

"Why, he told me with his own lips that his daughter had given him to understand that she preferred you to Brown."

"And so she did give him to understand—so she did," affirmed Banks, in despair, "but it was all a blind so that he wouldn't make trouble between her and Brown. I tell you, Smith," he concluded, bringing his clenched fist down on the wheel of the wagon, from which a shower of dried mud was scattered into Ordway's face, "I tell you, I don't believe women think any more of telling a lie than we do of taking a cocktail!"

"But how do you know all this, my dear fellow? and when did you discover it?"

"That's the awful part, I'm coming to it." His voice gave out and he swallowed a lump in his throat

before he could go on. "Oh, Smith, Smith, I declare, if it's the last word I speak, I believe she means to run away with Brown this very evening!"

"What?" cried Ordway, hardly raising his voice above a whisper. A burning resentment, almost a repulsion swept over him, and he felt that he could have spurned the girl's silly beauty if she had lain at his feet. What was a woman like Milly Trend worth, that she should cost him, a stranger to her, so great a price?

"Tell me all," he said sharply, turning again to his companion. "How did you hear it? Why do you believe it? Have you spoken to Jasper?"

Banks blinked hard for a minute, while a single large round teardrop trickled slowly down his freckled nose.

"I should never have suspected it," he answered, "but for Milly's old black Mammy Delphy, who has lived with her ever since she was born. Aunt Delphy came upon her this morning when she was packing her bag, and by hook or crook, heaven knows how, she managed to get at the truth. Then she came directly to me, for it seems that she hates Brown worse than the devil."

"When did she come to you?"

"A half hour ago. I left her and rushed straight to you."

Ordway drew out his watch, and stood looking at the face of it with a wondering frown.

"That must have been five o'clock," he said, "and it is now half past. Shall I catch Milly, do you think, if I start at once?"

"You?" cried Banks, "you mean that you will stop her?"

"I mean that I must stop her. There is no question."

As he spoke he had started quickly down the warehouse, scattering as he walked, a pile of trash which the old Negro had swept together in the centre of the floor. So rapid were the long strides with which he moved that Banks, in spite of his frantic haste, could barely keep in step with him as they passed into the street. Ordway's face had changed as if from a spasm of physical pain, and as Banks looked at it in the afternoon light he was startled to find that it was the face of an old man. The brows were bent, the mouth drawn, the skin sallow, and the gray hair upon the temples had become suddenly more prominent than the dark locks above.

"Then you knew Brown before?" asked Banks, with an accession of courage, as they slackened their pace with the beginning of the hill.

"I knew him before—yes," replied Ordway, shortly. His reserve had become not only a mask, but a coffin, and his companion had for a minute a sensation that was almost uncanny as he walked by his side—as if he were striving to keep pace uphill with a dead man. Banks had known him to be silent, gloomy, uncommunicative before now, but he had never until this instant seen that look of iron resolve which was too cold and still to approach the heat of passion. Had he been furious Banks might have shared his fury with him; had he shown bitterness of mood Banks

might have been bitter also; had he given way even to sardonic merriment, Banks felt that it would have been possible to have feigned a mild hilarity of manner; but before this swift, implacable pursuit of something he could not comprehend, the wretched lover lost all consciousness of the part which he himself must act, well or ill, in the event to come.

At Trend's gate Ordway stopped and looked at his companion with a smile which appeared to throw an artificial light upon his drawn features.

"Will you let me speak to her alone first," he asked, "for a few minutes?"

"I'll take a turn up the street then," returned Banks eagerly, still panting from his hurried walk up the long hill. "She's in the room on the right now," he added, "I can see her feeding the canary."

Ordway nodded indifferently. "I shan't be long," he said, and going inside the gate, passed deliberately up the walk and into the room where Milly stood at the window with her mouth close against the wires of the gilt cage.

At his step on the threshold the girl turned quickly toward the door with a fluttering movement. Surprise and disappointment battled for an instant in her glance, and he gathered from his first look that he had come at the moment when she was expecting Wherry. He noticed, too, that in spite of the mild autumn weather, she wore a dark dress which was not unsuitable for a long journey, and that her sailor hat, from which a blue veil floated, lay on a chair in one corner. A deeper meaning had entered into the

shallow prettiness of her face, and he felt that she had passed through some subtle change in which she had left her girlhood behind her. For the first time it occurred to him that Milly Trend was deserving not only of passion, but of sympathy.

At the withdrawal of the lips that had offered him his bit of cake, the canary fluttered from his perch and uttered a sweet, short, questioning note; and in Milly's face, as she came forward, there was something of this birdlike, palpitating entreaty.

"Oh, it is you, Mr. Smith," she said, "I did not hear your ring."

"I didn't ring," responded Ordway, as he took her trembling outstretched hand in which she still held the bit of sponge cake, "I saw you at the window so I came straight in without sending word. What I have to say to you is so important that I dared not lose a minute."

"And it is about me?" asked Milly, with a quiver of her eyelids.

"No, it is about someone else, though it concerns you in a measure. The thing I have to tell you relates directly to a man whom you know as Horatio Brown——"

He spoke so quickly that the girl divined his meaning from his face rather than from his words.

"Then you know him?" she questioned, in a frightened whisper.

"I know more of his life than I can tell you. It is sufficient to say that to the best of my belief he has a wife now living—that he has been married before

this under different names to at least two living women——"

He stopped and put out his hand with an impulsive protecting gesture, for the wounded vanity in the girl's face had pierced to his heart. "Will you let me see your father?" he asked gently, "would it not be better for me to speak to him instead of to you?"

"No, no!" cried Milly sharply, "don't tell him—don't dare to tell him—for he would believe it and it is a lie—it is a lie! I tell you it is a lie!"

"As God is my witness it is the truth," he answered, without resentment.

"Then you shall accuse him to his face. He is coming in a little while, and you shall accuse him before me——"

She stopped breathlessly and the pity in his look made her wince sharply and shrink away. With her movement the piece of sponge cake fell from her loosened fingers and rolled on the floor at her feet.

"But if it were true how could you know it?" she demanded. "No, it is not true—I don't believe it! I don't believe it!" she repeated in a passion of terror.

At her excited voice the canary, swinging on his perch, broke suddenly into an ecstasy of song, and Milly's words, when she spoke again, were drowned in the liquid sweetness that flowed from the cage. For a minute Ordway stood in silence waiting for the music to end, while he watched the angry, helpless tremor of the girl's outstretched hands.

"Will you promise me to wait?" he asked, raising

his voice in the effort to be heard, "will you promise me to wait at least until you find out the truth or the falsehood of what I tell you?"

"But I don't believe it," repeated Milly in the stubborn misery of hopeless innocence.

"Ask yourself, then, what possible reason I could have in coming to you—except to save you?"

"Wait!" cried the girl angrily, "I can't hear—wait!" Picking up a shawl from a chair, she flung it with an impatient gesture over the cage, and turning immediately from the extinguished bird, took up his sentence where he had broken off.

"To save me?" she repeated, "you mean from marriage?"

"From a marriage that would be no marriage. Am I right in suspecting that you meant to go away with him to-night?"

She bowed her head—all the violent spirit gone out of her. "I was ready to go to-night," she answered, like a child that has been hurt and is still afraid of what is to come.

"And you promise me that you will give it up?" he went on gently.

"I don't know—I can't tell—I must see him first," she said, and burst suddenly into tears, hiding her face in her hands with a pathetic, shamed gesture.

Turning away for a moment, he stood blankly staring down into the jar of goldfish. Then, as her sobs grew presently beyond her control, he came back to the chair into which she had dropped and looked with moist eyes at her bowed fair head.

"Before I leave you, will you promise me to give him up?—to forget him if it be possible?" he asked.

"But it is not possible," she flashed back, lifting her wet blue eyes to his. "How dare you come to me with a tale like this? Oh, I hate you! I shall always hate you! Will you go?"

Before her helpless fury he felt a compassion stronger even than the emotion her tears had aroused.

"It is not fair that I should tell you so much and not tell you all, Milly," he said. "It is not fair that in accusing the man you love, I should still try to shield myself. I know that these things are true because Brown's—Wherry is his name—trial took place immediately before mine—and we saw each other during the terms which we served in prison."

Then before she could move or speak he turned from her and went rapidly from the house and out into the walk.

## CHAPTER IX

### At the Cross-roads

At the corner he looked down the street and saw the red flag still swelling in the wind. A man spoke to him; the face was familiar, but he could not recall the name, until after a few congratulatory words about his political prospects, he remembered, with a start, that he was talking to Major Leary.

"You may count on a clean sweep of votes, Mr. Smith—there's no doubt of it," said the Major, beaming with his amiable fiery face.

"There's no doubt of it?" repeated Ordway, while he regarded the enthusiastic politician with a perplexed and troubled look. The Major, the political campaign, the waving red flag and the noisy little town had receded to a blank distance from the moment in which he stood. He wondered vaguely what connection he—Daniel Ordway—had ever held with these things?

Yet his smile was still bright and cheerful as he turned away, with an apologetic word, and passed on into the road to Cedar Hill. The impulse which had driven him breathlessly into Milly's presence had yielded now to the mere dull apathy of indifference, and it mattered to him no longer whether the girl was saved or lost in the end. He thought of her

vanity, of her trivial pink and white prettiness with a return of his old irritation. Well, he had done his part—his temperament had ruled him at the decisive instant, and the ensuing consequences of his confession had ceased now to affect or even to interest him. Then, with something like a pang of thought, he remembered that he had with his own hand burned his bridges behind him, and that there was no way out for him except the straight way which led over the body of Daniel Smith. His existence in Tappahannock was now finished; his victory had ended in flight; and there was nothing ahead of him except the new beginning and the old ending. A fresh start and then what? And afterward the few years of quiet again and at the end the expected, the inevitable recurrence of the disgrace which he had begun to recognise as some impersonal natural law that followed upon his footsteps. As the future gradually unrolled itself in his imagination, he felt that his heart sickened in the clutch of the terror that had sprung upon him. Was there to be no end anywhere? Could no place, no name even afford him a permanent shelter? Looking ahead now he saw himself as an old man wandering from refuge to refuge, pursued always by the resurrected corpse of his old life, which though it contained neither his spirit nor his will, still triumphed by the awful semblance it bore his outward body. Was he to be always alone? Was there no spot in his future where he could possess himself in reality of the freedom which was his in name?

Without seeing, without hearing, he went almost deliriously where his road led him, for the terror in his thought had become a living presence before which his spirit rather than his body moved. He walked rapidly, yet it seemed to him that his feet were inert and lifeless weights which were dragged forward by the invincible torrent of his will. In the swiftness of his flight, he felt that he was a conscious soul chained to a body that was a corpse.

When he came at last to the place where the two roads crossed before the ruined gate, he stopped short, while the tumult died gradually in his brain, and the agony through which he had just passed appeared as a frenzy to his saner judgment. Looking up a moment later as he was about to enter the avenue, he saw that Emily Brooke was walking toward him under the heavy shadow of the cedars. In the first movement of her surprise the mask which she had always worn in his presence dropped from her face, and as she stepped from the gloom into the sunlight, he felt that the sweetness of her look bent over him like protecting wings. For a single instant, as her eyes gazed wide open into his, he saw reflected in them the visions from which his soul had shrunk back formerly abashed. Nothing had changed in her since yesterday; she was outwardly the same brave and simple woman, with her radiant smile, her blown hair, and her roughened hands. Yet because of that revealing look she appeared no longer human in his eyes, but something almost unearthly bright and distant, like the sunshine he

had followed so often through the bars of his prison cell.

"You are suffering," she said, when he would have passed on, and he felt that she had divined without words all that he could not utter.

"Don't pity me," he answered, smiling at her question, because to smile had become for him the easier part of habit, "I'm not above liking pity, but it isn't exactly what I need. And besides, I told you once, you know, that whatever happened to me would always be the outcome of my own failure."

"Yes, I remember you told me so—but does that make it any easier to bear?"

"Easier to bear?—no, but I don't think the chief end of things is to be easy, do you?"

She shook her head. "But isn't our chief end just to make them easier for others?" she asked.

The pity in her face was like an illumination, and her features were enkindled with a beauty he had never found in them before. It was the elemental motherhood in her nature that he had touched; and he felt as he watched her that this ecstasy of tenderness swelled in her bosom and overflowed her lips. Confession to her would have been for him the supreme luxury of despair; but because his heart strained toward her, he drew back and turned his eyes to the road, which stretched solitary and dim beyond them.

"Well, I suppose, I've got what I deserved," he said, "the price that a man pays for being a fool, he pays but once and that is his whole life long."

"But it ought not to be so—it is not just," she answered.

"Just?" he repeated, bitterly, "no, I dare say, it isn't—but the facts of life don't trouble themselves about justice, do they? Is it just, for instance, that you should slave your youth away on your brother's farm, while he sits and plays dominoes on the porch? Is it just that with the instinct for luxury in your blood you should be condemned to a poverty so terrible as this?" He reached out and touched the little red hand hanging at her side. "Is this just?" he questioned with an ironical smile.

"There is some reason for it," she answered bravely, "I feel it though I cannot see it."

"Some reason—yes, but that reason is not justice—not the little human justice that we can call by the name. It's something infinitely bigger than any idea that we have known."

"I can trust," she said softly, "but I can't reason."

"Don't reason—don't even attempt to—let God run his world. Do you think if we didn't believe in the meaning—in the purpose of it all that you and I could stand together here like this? It's because we believe that we can be happy even while we suffer."

"Then you will be happy again—to-morrow?"

"Surely. Perhaps to-night—who knows? I've had a shock. My brain is whirling and I can't see straight. In a little while it will be over and I shall steady down."

"But I should like to help you now while it lasts," she said.

"You are helping me—it's a mercy that you stand there and listen to my wild talk. Do you know I was telling myself as I came along the road just now that there wasn't a living soul to whom I should dare to say that I was in a quake of fear."

"A quake of fear?" She looked at him with swimming eyes, and by that look he saw that she loved him. If he had stretched out his arms, he knew that the passion of her sorrow would have swept her to his breast; and he felt that every fibre of his starved soul and body cried out for the divine food that she offered. At the moment he did not stop to ask himself whether it was his flesh or his spirit that hungered after her, for his whole being had dissolved into the longing which drew him as with cords to her lips. All he understood at the instant was that in his terrible loneliness love had been offered him and he must refuse the gift. A thought passed like a drawn sword between them, and he saw in his imagination Lydia lowering her black veil at their last parting.

"It's a kind of cowardliness, I suppose," he went on with his eyes on the ground, "but I was thinking that minute how greatly I needed help and how much—how very much—you had given me. If I ever learn really to live it will be because of you—because of your wonderful courage, your unfailing sweetness——"

For the first time he saw in her face the consciousness of her own unfulfilment. "If you only knew how often I wonder if it is worth while," she answered.

At this he made a sudden start forward and then checked himself. "The chief tragedy in my life," he said, "is that I knew you twenty years too late."

Until his words were uttered he did not realise how much of a confession he had put into them; and with the discovery he watched her face bloom softly like a flower that opens its closed petals.

"If I could have helped you then, why cannot I help you now?" she asked, while the innocence in her look humbled him more than a divine fury would have done. The larger his ideal of her became, the keener grew his sense of failure—of bondage to that dead past from which he could never release his living body. As he looked at her now he realised that the supreme thing he had missed in life was the control of the power which lies in simple goodness; and the purity of Lydia appeared to him as a shining blank—an unwritten surface beside the passionate humanity in the heart of the girl before him.

"You will hear things from others which I can't tell you and then you will understand," he said.

"I shall hear nothing that will make me cease to believe in you," she answered.

"You will hear that I have done wrong in my life and you will understand that if I have suffered it has been by my own fault."

She met his gaze without wavering.

"I shall still believe in you," she responded.

Her eyes were on his face and she saw that the wan light of the afterglow revealed the angularities of his brow and chin and filled in with shadows the deeper

hollows in his temples. The smile on his lips was almost ironical as he answered.

"Those from whom I might have expected loyalty, fell away from me—my father, my wife, my children——"

"To believe against belief is a woman's virtue," she responded, "but at least it is a virtue."

"You mean that you would have been my friend through everything?" he asked quickly, half blinded by the ideal which seemed to flash so closely to his eyelids.

There was scorn in her voice as she answered: "If I had been your friend once—yes, a thousand times."

Before his inward vision there rose the conception of a love that would have pardoned, blessed and purified. Bending his head he kissed her little cold hand once and let it fall. Then without looking again into her face, he entered the avenue and went on alone.

## CHAPTER X

### Between Man and Man

When he entered Tappahannock the following morning, he saw with surprise that the red flag was still flying above the street. As he looked into the face of the first man he met, he felt a sensation of relief, almost of gratitude because he received merely the usual morning greeting; and the instant afterward he flinched and hesitated before replying to the friendly nod of the harness-maker, stretching himself under the hanging bridles in the door of the little shop.

Entering the warehouse he glanced nervously down the deserted building, and when a moment later he opened the door into Baxter's office, he grew hot at the familiar sight of the local newspaper in his employer's hands. The years had divided suddenly and he saw again the crowd in Fifth Avenue as he walked home on the morning of his arrest. He smelt the smoke of the great city; he heard the sharp street cries around him; and he pushed aside the fading violets offered him by the crippled flower seller at the corner. He even remembered, without effort, the particular bit of scandal retailed to him over a cigar by the club wit who had joined him. All his sensations to-day were what they had been

then, only now his consciousness was less acute, as if the edge of his perceptions had been blunted by the force of the former blow.

"Howdy, Smith, is that you?" remarked Baxter, crushing the top of the paper beneath the weight of his chin as he looked over it at Ordway. "Did you meet Banks as you came in? He was in here asking for you not two minutes ago."

"Banks? No, I didn't see him. What did he want?" As he put the ordinary question the dull level of his voice surprised him.

"Oh, he didn't tell me," returned Baxter, "but it was some love-lorn whining he had to do, I reckon. Now what I can't understand is how a man can be so narrow sighted as only to see one woman out of the whole bouncing sex of 'em. It would take more than a refusal—it would take a downright football to knock out my heart. Good Lord! in this world of fine an' middling fine women, the trouble ain't to get the one you want, but to keep on wanting the one you get. I've done my little share of observing in my time, and what I've learned from it is that the biggest trial a man can have is not to want another man's wife, but *to want* to want his own."

A knock at the door called Ordway out into the warehouse, where he yielded himself immediately to the persuasive voice of Banks.

"Come back here a minute, will you, out of hearing? I tried to get to you last night and couldn't."

"Has anything gone wrong?" inquired Ordway, following the other to a safe distance from Baxter's

office. At first he had hardly had courage to lift his eyes to Banks' face, but reassured by the quiet opening of the conversation, he stood now with his sad gaze fixed on the beaming freckled features of the melancholy lover.

"I only wanted to tell you that she didn't go," whispered Banks, rolling his prominent eyes into the dusky recesses of the warehouse, "she's ill in bed to-day, and Brown left town on the eight-forty-five this morning."

"So he's gone for good!" exclaimed Ordway, and drew a long breath as if he had been released from an emotional tension which had suspended, while it lasted, the ordinary movement of life. Since he had prepared himself for the worst was it possible that his terror of yesterday would scatter to-day like the delusions of an unsettled brain? Had Wherry held back in mercy or had Milly Trend? Even if he were spared now must he still live on here unaware how widely—or how pitifully—his secret was known? Would this ceaseless dread of discovery prove again, as it had proved in the past, more terrible even than the discovery itself? Would he be able to look fearlessly at Milly Trend again?—at Baxter? at Banks? at Emily?"

"Well, I've got to thank you for it, Smith?" said Banks. "How you stopped it, I don't know for the life of me, but stop it you did."

The cheerful selfishness in such rejoicing struck Ordway even in the midst of his own bitter musing. Though Banks adored Milly, soul and body, he was

frankly jubilant over the tragic ending of her short romance.

"I hope there's little danger of its beginning anew," Ordway remarked presently, with less sympathy than he would have shown his friend twelve hours before.

"I suppose you wouldn't like to tell me what you said to her?" inquired Banks, his customary awe of his companion swept away in the momentary swing of his elation.

"No, I shouldn't like to tell you," returned Ordway quietly.

"Then it's all right, of course, and I'll be off to drape the town hall in bunting for to-morrow night. We're going to make the biggest political display for you that Tappahannock has ever seen."

At the instant Ordway was hardly conscious of the immensity of his relief, but some hours later, after the early closing of the warehouse, when he walked slowly back along the road to Cedar Hill, it seemed to him that his life had settled again into its quiet monotonous spaces. The peaceful fields on either side, with their short crop of live-ever-lasting, in which a few lonely sheep were browsing, appeared to him now as a part of the inward breadth and calm of the years that he had spent in Tappahannock.

In the loneliness of the road he could tell himself that the fear of Gus Wherry was gone for a time at least, yet the next day upon going into town he was aware of the same nervous shrinking from the people

he passed, from the planters hanging about the warehouse, from Baxter buried behind his local newspaper.

"They've got a piece as long as your arm about you in the Tappahannock *Herald*, Smith," cried Baxter, chuckling; and Ordway felt himself redden painfully with apprehension. Not until the evening, when he came out upon the platform under the floating buntings in the town hall, did he regain entirely the self-possession which he had lost in the presence of Milly Trend.

In its white and red decorations, with the extravagant glare of its gas-jets, the hall had assumed almost a festive appearance; and as Ordway glanced at the crowded benches and doorways, he forgot the trivial political purpose he was to serve, in the more human relation in which he stood to the men who had gathered to hear him speak. These men were his friends, and if they believed in him he felt a triumphant conviction that they had seen their belief justified day by day, hour by hour, since he had come among them. In the crowd of faces before him, he recognised, here and there, workingmen whom he had helped—operatives in Jasper Trend's cotton mills, or in the smaller factories which combined with the larger to create the political situation in Tappahannock. Closer at hand he saw the shining red face of Major Leary; the affectionate freckled face of Banks; the massive benevolent face of Baxter. As he looked at them an emotion which was almost one of love stirred in his breast, and he felt the words

he had prepared dissolve and fade from his memory to reunite in an appeal of which he had not thought until this minute. There was something, he knew now, for him to say to-night—something so infinitely large that he could utter it only because it rose like love or sorrow to his lips. Of all the solemn moments when he had stood before these men, with his open Bible, in the green field or in the little grove of pines, there was none so solemn, he felt, as the approaching instant in which he would speak to them no longer as a man to children, but as a man to men.

On the stage before him Baxter was addressing the house, his soft, persuasive voice mingling with a sympathetic murmur from the floor. The applause which had broken out at Ordway's entrance had not yet died away, and with each mention of his name, with each allusion to his services to Tappahannock, it burst forth again, enthusiastic, irrepressible, overwhelming. Never before, it seemed to him, sitting there on the platform with his roughened hands crossed on his knees, had he felt himself to be so intimately a part of the community in which he lived. Never before—not even when he had started this man in life, had bought off that one's mortgage or had helped another to struggle free of drink, had he come quite so near to the pathetic individual lives that compose the mass. They loved him, they believed in him, and they were justified! At the moment it seemed to him nothing—less than nothing—that they should make him Mayor of Tappa-

hannock. In this one instant of understanding they had given him more than any office — than any honour.

While he sat there outwardly so still, so confident of his success, it seemed to him that in the exhilaration of the hour he was possessed of a new and singularly penetrating insight into life. Not only did he see further and deeper than he had ever seen before, but he looked beyond the beginning of things into the causes and beyond the ending of them into the results. He saw himself and why he was himself as clearly as he saw his sin and why he had sinned. Out of their obscurity his father and his mother returned to him, and as he met the bitter ironical smile of the one and the curved black brows and red, half open mouth of the other, he knew himself to be equally the child of each, for he understood at last why he was a mixture of strength and weakness, of gaiety and sadness, of bitterness and compassion. His short, troubled childhood rushed through his thoughts, and with that swiftness of memory which comes so often in tragic moments, he lived over again—not separately and in successive instants—but fully, vitally, and in all the freshness of experience, the three events which he saw now, in looking back, as the milestones upon his road. Again he saw his mother as she lay in her coffin, with her curved black brows and half open mouth frozen into a joyous look, and in that single fleeting instant he passed through his meeting with the convict at the wayside station, and through the long

suspended minutes when he had waited in the Stock Exchange for the rise in the market which did not come. And these things appeared to him, not as detached and obscure remnants of his past, but clear and delicate and vivid as if they were projected in living colours against the illumination of his mind. They were there not to bewilder, but to make plain; not to accuse, but to vindicate. "Everything is clear to me now and I see it all," he thought, "and if I can only keep this penetration of vision nothing will be harder to-morrow than it is to-night." In his whole life there was not an incident too small for him to remember it and to feel that it was significant of all the rest; and he knew that if he could have seen from the beginning as clearly as he saw to-night, his past would not have been merely different, it would have been entirely another than his own.

Baxter had stopped, and turning with an embarrassed upheaval of his whole body, he spoke to Ordway, who rose at his words and came slowly forward to the centre of the stage. A hoarse murmur, followed by a tumult of shouts, greeted him, while he stood for a moment looking silently among those upturned faces for the faces of the men to whom he must speak. "That one will listen because I nursed him back to life, and that one because I brought him out of ruin—and that one and that one—" He knew them each by name, and as his gaze travelled from man to man he felt that he was seeking a refuge from some impending evil in the shelter of the good deeds that he had done.

Though he held a paper in his hand, he did not look at it, for he had found his words in that instant of illumination when, seated upon the stage, he had seen the meaning of his whole life made plain. The present event and the issue of it no longer concerned him; he had ceased to fear, even to shrink from the punishment that was yet to come. In the completeness with which he yielded himself to the moment, he felt that he was possessed of the calm, almost of the power of necessity; and he experienced suddenly the sensation of being lifted and swept forward on one of the high waves of life. He spoke rapidly, without effort, almost without consciousness of the words he uttered, until it seemed to him presently that it was the torrent of his speech which carried him outward and upward with that strange sense of lightness, of security. And this lightness, this security belonged not to him, but to some outside current of being.

His speech was over, and he had spoken to these factory workers as no man had spoken before him in Tappahannock. With his last word the silence had held tight and strained for a minute, and then the grateful faces pressed round him and the ringing cheers passed through the open windows out into the street. His body was still trembling, but as he stood there with his sparkling blue eyes on the house, he looked gay and boyish. He had made his mark, he had spoken his best speech, and he had

touched not merely the factory toilers in Tappahannock, but that common pulse of feeling in which all humanity is made one. Then the next instant, while he still waited, he was aware of a new movement upon the platform behind him, and a man came forward and stopped short under the gas jet, which threw a flickering yellow light upon his face. Though he had seen him but once, he recognized him instantly as the short, long-nosed, irascible manager of the cotton mills, and with the first glance into his face he had heard already the unspoken question and the reply.

"May I ask you, Mr. Smith," began the little man, suddenly, "if you can prove your right to vote or to hold office in Virginia?"

Ordway's gaze passed beyond him to rest upon Baxter and Major Leary, who sat close together, genial, elated, rather thirsty. At the moment he felt sorry for Baxter—not for himself.

"No," he answered with a smile which threw a humorous light upon the question, "I cannot — can you prove yours?"

The little man cleared his throat with a sniffling sound, and when he spoke again it was in a high nasal voice, as if he had become suddenly very excited or very angry.

"Is your name Daniel Smith?" he asked, with a short laugh.

The question was out at last and the silence in which Ordway stood was like the suspension between thought and thought. All at once he found himself

wondering why he had lived in hourly terror of this instant, for now that it was upon him, he saw that it was no more tragic, no less commonplace, than the most ordinary instant of his life. As in the past his courage had revived in him with the first need of decisive action, so he felt it revive now, and lifting his head, he looked straight into the angry, little eyes of the man who waited, under the yellow gaslight, on the platform before him.

"My name," he answered, still smiling, "is Daniel Ordway."

There was no confusion in his mind, no anxiety, no resentment. Instead the wonderful brightness of a moment ago still shone in his thoughts, and while he appeared to rest his sparkling gaze on the face of his questioner, he was seeing, in reality, the road by which he had come to Tappahannock, and at the beginning of the road the prison, and beyond the prison the whole of his past life.

"Did you serve a term in prison before you came here?"

"Yes."

"Were you tried and convicted in New York?"

"Yes."

"Were you guilty?"

Looking over the head of the little man, Ordway's gaze travelled slowly across the upturned faces upon the floor of the house. Hardly a man passed under his look whom he had not assisted once at least in the hour of his need. "I saved that one from drink," he thought almost joyfully, "that one from beggary—

I stood side by side with that other in the hour of his shame——"

"Were you guilty?" repeated the high nasal voice in his ear.

His gaze came quickly back, and as it passed over the head of Baxter, he was conscious again of a throb of pity.

"Yes," he answered for the last time. Then, while the silence lasted, he turned from the platform and went out of the hall into the night.

## CHAPTER XI

### Between Man and Woman

He walked rapidly to the end of the street, and then slackened his pace almost unconsciously as he turned into the country road. The night had closed in a thick black curtain over the landscape, and the windows of the Negroes' cabins burned like little still red flames along the horizon. Straight ahead the road was visible as a pale, curving streak across the darkness.

A farmer, carrying a lantern, came down the path leading from the fields, and hearing Ordway's footsteps in the road, flashed the light suddenly into his face. Upon recognition there followed a cheerful "good-night!" and the offer of the use of the lantern to Cedar Hill. "It's a black night and you'll likely have trouble in keeping straight. I've been to look after a sick cow, but I can feel my way up to the house in two minutes."

"Thank you," returned Ordway, smiling as the light shone full in his face, "but my feet are accustomed to the road."

He passed on, while the farmer turned at the gate by the roadside, to shout cheerfully after him: "Well, good-night—Mayor!"

The gate closed quickly, and the ray of the lantern darted like a pale yellow moth across the grass.

As Ordway went on it seemed to him that the darkness became tangible, enveloping—that he had to fight his way through it presently as through water. The little red flames danced along the horizon until he wondered if they were burning only in his imagination. He felt tired and dazed as if his body had been beaten into insensibility, but the hour through which he had just passed appeared to have left merely a fading impression upon his brain. Not only had he ceased to care, he had ceased to think of it. When he tried now to recall the manager of the cotton mills, it was to remember, with aversion, his angry little eyes, his high nasal voice, and the wart upon the end of his long nose. At the instant these physical details were the only associations which the man's name presented to his thoughts. The rest was something so insignificant that it had escaped his memory. He felt in a vague way that he was sorry for Baxter, yet this very feeling of sympathy bored and annoyed him. It was plainly ridiculous to be sorry for a person as rich, as fat, as well fed as his employer. Wherever he looked the little red flames flickered and waved in the fields, and when he lifted his eyes to the dark sky, he saw them come and go in short, scintillant flashes, like fire struck from an anvil. They were in his brain, he supposed, after all, and so was this tangible darkness, and so, too, was this indescribable delicacy and lightness with which he moved. Everything was in his brain, even his ridiculous pity for Baxter and the angry-eyed little manager with

the wart on his long nose. He could see these things distinctly, though he had forgotten everything that had been so clear to him while he stood on the stage of the town hall. His past life and the prison and even the illumination in which he had remembered them so vividly were obscured now as if they, too, had been received into the tangible darkness.

From the road behind him the sound of footsteps reached him suddenly, and he quickened his pace with an impulse, rather than a determination of flight. But the faster he walked the faster came the even beat of the footsteps, now rising, now falling with a rhythmic regularity in the dust of the road. Once he glanced back, but he could see nothing because of the encompassing blackness, and in the instant of his delay it seemed to him that the pursuit gained steadily upon him, still moving with the regular muffled beat of the footsteps in the thick dust. A horror of recognition had come over him, and as he walked on breathlessly, now almost running, it occurred to him, like an inspiration, that he might drop aside into the fields and so let his pursuer pass on ahead. The next instant he realised that the darkness could not conceal the abrupt pause of his flight—that as those approaching footsteps fell on his ears, so must the sound of his fall on the ears of the man behind him. Then a voice called his name, and he stopped short, and stood, trembling from head to foot, by the side of the road.

"Smith!" cried the voice, "if it's you, Smith, for God's sake stop a minute!"

"Yes, it's I," he answered, waiting, and a moment afterward the hand of Banks reached out of the night and clasped his arm.

"Hold on," said Banks, breathing hard, "I'm all blown."

His laboured breath came with a struggling violence that died gradually away, but while it lasted the strain of the meeting, the awkwardness of the emotional crisis, seemed suddenly put off — suspended. Now in the silence the tension became so great that, drawing slightly away from the detaining hold, Ordway was about to resume his walk. At his first movement, however, Banks clung the more firmly to his arm. "Oh, damn it, Smith!" he burst out, and with the exclamation Ordway felt that the touch of flesh and blood had reached to the terrible loneliness in which he stood. In a single oath Banks had uttered the unutterable spirit of prayer.

"You followed me?" asked Ordway quietly, while the illusions of the flight, the physical delicacy and lightness, the tangible darkness, the little red flames in the fields, departed from him. With the first hand that was laid on his own, his nature swung back into balance, and he felt that he possessed at the moment a sanity that was almost sublime.

"As soon as I could get out I came. There was such a crush," said Banks, "I thought I'd catch up with you at once, but it was so black I couldn't see my hand before me. In a little while I heard footsteps, so I kept straight on."

"I wish you hadn't, Banks."

"But I had to." His usually cheerful voice sounded hoarse and throaty. "I ain't much of a chap at words, Smith, you know that, but I want just to say that you're the best friend I ever had, and I haven't forgot it—I haven't forgot it," he repeated, and blew his nose. "Nothing that that darn fool of a manager said to-night can come between you and me," he went on laboriously after a minute. "If you ever want my help, by thunder, I'll go to hell and back again for you without a word."

Stretching out his free hand Ordway laid it upon his friend's shoulder.

"You're a first-rate chap, Banks," he said cheerfully, at which a loud sob burst from Banks, who sought to disguise it the instant afterward in a violent cough.

"You're a first-rate chap," repeated Ordway gently, "and I'm glad, in spite of what I said, that you came after me just now. I'm going away to-morrow, you know, and it's probable that I shan't see you again."

"But won't you stay on in Tappahannock? In two weeks all this will blow over and things will be just what they were before."

Ordway shook his head, a movement which Banks felt, though he did not see it.

"No, I'll go away, it's best," he answered, and though his voice had dropped to a dull level there was still a cheerful sound to it, "I'll go away and begin again in a new place."

"Then I'll go, too," said Banks.

"What! and leave Milly? No, you won't come, Banks, you'll stay here."

"But I'll see you sometimes, shan't I?"

"Perhaps?—that's likely, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's likely," repeated Banks, and fell silent from sheer weight of sorrow. "At least you'll let me go with you to the station?" he said at last, after a long pause in which he had been visited by one of those acute flashes of sympathy which are to the heart what intuition is to the intellect.

"Why, of course," responded Ordway, more touched by the simple request than he had been even by the greater loyalty. "You may do that, Banks, and I'll thank you for it. And now go back to Tappahannock," he added, "I must take the midday train and there are a few preparations I've still to make."

"But where will you go?" demanded Banks, swinging round again after he had turned from him.

"Where?" repeated Ordway blankly, and he added indifferently, "I hadn't thought."

"The midday train goes west," said Banks.

"Then, I'll go west. It doesn't matter."

Banks had already started off, when turning back suddenly, he caught Ordway's hand and wrung it in a grip that hurt. Then without speaking again, he hurried breathlessly in the direction from which he had come.

A few steps beyond the cross-roads Ordway saw through the heavy foliage the light in the dining-room at Cedar Hill. Then as he entered the avenue,

he lost sight of it again, until he had rounded the curve that swept up to the front porch. At his knock Emily opened the door, with a lamp held in her hand, and he saw her face, surrounded by dim waves of hair, shining pale and transparent in the glimmering circle of light. As he followed her into the dining-room, he realised that after the family had gone upstairs to bed, she had sat at her sewing under the lamp and waited for his knock. At the knowledge a sense of comfort, of homeliness came over him, and he felt all at once that his misery was not so great as he had believed it to be a moment ago.

"May I get you something?" she asked, placing the lamp upon the table and lowering the wick that the flame might not shine on his pallid and haggard face.

He shook his head; then as she turned from him toward the hearth, he followed her and stood looking down at the smouldering remains of a wood fire. Her work-basket and a pile of white ruffles which she had been hemming were on the table, but moved by a feeling of their utter triviality in the midst of a tragedy she vaguely understood, she swept them hurriedly into a chair, and came over to lay her hand upon his arm.

"What can I do? Oh, what can I do?" she asked. Taking her hand from his sleeve, he held it for an instant in his grasp, as if the pressure of her throbbing palm against his revived some living current under the outer deadness that enveloped him.

"I am going away from Tappahannock to-morrow, Emily," he said.

"To-morrow?" she repeated, and laid her free hand upon his shoulder with a soothing, motherly gesture—a gesture which changed their spiritual relations to those of a woman and a child.

"A man asked me three questions to-night," he went on quietly, yet in a voice which seemed to feel a pang in every word it uttered. "He asked me if my name was Daniel Smith, and I answered—no."

As he hesitated, she lifted her face and smiled at him, with a smile which he knew to be the one expression of love, of comprehension, that she could offer. It was a smile which a mother might have bent upon a child that was about to pass under the surgeon's knife, and it differed from tears only in that it offered courage and not weakness.

"He asked me if I had been in prison before I came to Tappahannock—and I answered—yes."

His voice broke, rather than ceased, and lifting his gaze from her hands he looked straight into her wide-open eyes. The smile which she had turned to him a moment before was still on her lips, frozen there in the cold pallor of her face. Her eyes were the only things about her which seemed alive, and they appeared to him now not as eyes but as thoughts made visible. Bending her head quickly she kissed the hand which enclosed her own.

"I still believe," she said, and looked into his face.

"But it is true," he replied slowly.

"But it is not the whole truth," she answered, "and for that reason it is half a lie."

"Yes, it is not the whole truth," he repeated, in his effort to catch something of her bright courage.

"Why should they judge you by that and by nothing else?" she demanded with passion. "If that was true, is not your life in Tappahannock true also?"

"To you—to you," he answered, "but to-morrow everything will be forgotten about me except the fact that because I had been in prison, I have lived a lie."

"You are wrong—oh, believe me, you are wrong," she said softly, while her tears broke forth and streamed down her white face.

"No," he returned patiently, as if weighing her words in his thoughts, "I am right, and my life here is wasted now from the day I came. All that I do from this moment will be useless. I must go away."

"But where?" she questioned passionately, as Banks had questioned before her.

"Where?" he echoed, "I don't know—anywhere. The midday train goes west."

"And what will you do in the new place?" she asked through her tears.

He shook his head as if the question hardly concerned him.

"I shall begin again," he answered indifferently at last.

She was turning hopelessly from him, when her eyes fell upon a slip of yellow paper which Beverly had placed under a vase on the mantel, and drawing

it out, she glanced at the address before giving it into Ordway's hands.

"This must have come for you in the afternoon," she said, "I did not see it."

Taking the telegram from her, he opened it slowly, and read the words twice over.

"Your father died last night. Will you come home?
"RICHARD ORDWAY."

# BOOK THIRD

# THE LARGER PRISON

## CHAPTER I

### The Return to Life

As the train rounded the long curve, Ordway leaned from the window and saw spread before him the smiling battlefields that encircled Botetourt. From the shadow and sunlight of the distance a wind blew in his face, and he felt suddenly younger, fresher, as if the burden of the years had been lifted from him. The Botetourt to which he was returning was the place of his happiest memories; and closing his eyes to the landscape, he saw Lydia standing under the sparrows that flew out from the ivied walls of the old church. He met her pensive gaze; he watched her faint smile under the long black feather in her hat.

"His death was unexpected," said a strange voice in his ear, "but for the past five years I 've seen that he was a failing man."

The next instant his thoughts had scattered like startled birds, and without turning his head, he sat straining his ears to follow the conversation that went on, above the roar of the train, in the seat behind him.

"Had a son, did n't he?" inquired the man who had not spoken. "What's become of him, I'd like to know? I mean the chap who went to smash somewhere in the North."

"Oh, he misappropriated trust funds and got found out and sent to prison. When he came out, he went West, I heard, and struck a gold mine, but, all the same, he left his wife and children for the old man to look after. Ever seen his wife? Well, she 's a downright saint, if there ever lived one."

"And yet he went wrong, the more 's the pity."

"It 's a funny thing," commented the first speaker, who was evidently of a philosophic bent, "but I 've often noticed that a good wife is apt to make a bad husband. It looks somehow as if male human nature, like the Irish members, is obliged to sit on the Opposition bench. The only example that ever counts with it, is an example that urges the other way."

"Well, what about this particular instance? I hope at least that she has come into the old man's money?"

"Nobody can tell, but it 's generally believed that the two children will get the most of it. The son left a boy and a girl when he went to prison, you know."

"Ah, that 's rather a pity, is n't it?"

"Well, I can't say—they 've got good blood as well as bad, when it comes to that. My daughter went to school with the girl, and she was said to be, by long odds, the most popular member of her class. She graduated last spring, and people tell me that she has turned out to be the handsomest young woman in Botetourt."

"Like the mother?"

"No, dark and tall, with those snapping blue eyes of her grandmother's——"

So Alice was no longer the little girl in short white skirts, outstanding like a ballet dancer's! There was a pang for him in the thought, and he tried in vain to accustom himself to the knowledge that she would meet him to-night as a woman, not as a child. He remembered the morning when she had run out, as he passed up the staircase, to beg him to come in to listen to her music lesson; and with the sound of the stumbling scales in his ears, he felt again that terrible throbbing of his pulses and the dull weight of anguish which had escaped at last in an outburst of bitterness.

With a jolting motion the train drew up into the little station, and following the crowd that pressed through the door of the car, he emerged presently into the noisy throng of Negro drivers gathered before the rusty vehicles which were waiting beside the narrow pavement. Pushing aside the gaily decorated whips which encircled him at his approach, he turned, after a moment's hesitation, into one of the heavily shaded streets, which seemed to his awakened memory to have remained unaltered since the afternoon upon which he had left the town almost twenty years ago. The same red and gold maples stirred gently above his head; the same silent, green-shuttered houses were withdrawn behind glossy clusters of microphylla rose-creepers. Even the same shafts of sunshine slanted across

the roughly paved streets, which were strewn thickly with yellowed leaves. It was to Ordway as if a pleasant dream had descended upon the place, and had kept unchanged the particular golden stillness of that autumn afternoon when he had last seen it. All at once he realised that what Tappahannock needed was not progress, but age; and he saw for the first time that the mellowed charm of Botetourt was relieved against the splendour of an historic background. Not the distinction of the present, but the enchantment of the past, produced this quality of atmosphere into which the thought of Tappahannock entered like a vulgar discord. The dead, not the living, had built these walls, had paved these streets, had loved and fought and starved beneath these maples; and it was the memory of such solemn things that steeped the little town in its softening haze of sentiment. A thrill of pleasure, more intense than any he had known for months, shot through his heart, and the next instant he acknowledged with a sensation of shame that he was returning, not only to his people, but to his class. Was this all that experience, that humiliation, could do for one—that he should still find satisfaction in the refinements of habit, in the mere external pleasantness of life? As he passed the old church he saw that the sparrows still fluttered in and out of the ivy, which was full of twittering cries like a gigantic bird's nest, and he had suddenly a ghostly feeling as if he were a moving shadow under shadowy trees and unreal shafts of sunlight. A

moment later he almost held his breath lest the dark old church and the dreamy little town should vanish before his eyes and leave him alone in the outer space of shadows.

Coming presently under a row of poplars to the street in which stood his father's house—a square red brick building with white Doric columns to the portico—he saw with a shock of surprise that the funeral carriages were standing in a solemn train for many blocks. Until that moment it had not occured to him that he might come in time to look on the dead face of the man who had not forgiven him while he was alive; and at first he shivered and shrank back as if hesitating to enter the door that had been so lately closed against him. An old Negro driver, who sat on the curbing, wiping the broad black band on his battered silk hat with a red bandanna handkerchief, turned to speak to him with mingled sympathy and curiosity.

"Ef'n you don' hurry up, you'll miss de bes' er hit, marster," he remarked. "Dey's been gwine on a pow'ful long time, but I'se been a-lisenin' wid all my years en I ain' hyearn nairy a sh'ut come thoo' de do'. Lawd! Lawd! dey ain' mo'n like I mo'n, caze w'en dey buried my Salviny I set up sech a sh'uttin' dat I bu'st two er my spar ribs clean ter pieces."

Still muttering to himself he fell to polishing his old top hat more vigorously, while Ordway quickened his steps with an effort, and entering the gate, ascended the brick walk to the white steps of the portico.

A wide black streamer hung from the bell handle, so pushing open the door, which gave noiselessly before him, he entered softly into the heavy perfume of flowers. From the room on his right, which he remembered dimly as the formal drawing-room in the days of his earliest childhood, he heard a low voice speaking as if in prayer; and looking across the threshold, he saw a group of black robed persons kneeling in the faint light which fell through the chinks in the green shutters. The intense odour of lilies awoke in him a sharp anguish, which had no association in his thoughts with his father's death, and which he could not explain until the incidents of his mother's funeral crowded, one by one, into his memory. The scent of lilies was the scent of death in his nostrils, and he saw again the cool, high-ceiled room in the midst of which her coffin had stood, and through the open windows the wide green fields in which spring was just putting forth. That was nearly thirty years ago, yet the emotion he felt at this instant was less for his father who had died yesterday than for his mother whom he had lost while he was still a child.

At his entrance no one had observed him, and while the low prayer went on, he stood with bowed head searching among the veiled figures about the coffin for the figure of his wife. Was that Lydia, he wondered, kneeling there in her mourning garments with her brow hidden in her clasped hands? And as he looked at her it seemed to him that she had never lifted the black veil which she had lowered

over her face at their last parting. Though he was outwardly now among his own people, though the physical distance which divided him from his wife and children was barely a dozen steps, the loneliness which oppressed him was like the loneliness of the prison; and he understood that his real home was not here, but in Tappahannock—that his true kinship was with the labourers whose lives he had shared and whose bitter poverty he had lessened. In the presence of death he was conscious of the space, the luxury, the costly funeral wreaths that surrounded him; and these external refinements of living produced in him a sensation of shyness, as if he had no longer a rightful place in the class in which he had been born. Against his will he grew ashamed of his coarse clothes and his roughened hands; and with this burning sense of humiliation a wave of homesickness for Tappahannock swept over him—for the dusty little town, with its hot, close smells and for the blue tent of sky which was visible from his ivied window at Cedar Hill. Then he remembered, with a pang, that even from Tappahannock he had been cast out. For the second time since his release from prison, he felt cowed and beaten, like an animal that is driven to bay. The dead man in his coffin was more closely woven into his surroundings than was the living son who had returned to his inheritance.

As the grave faces looked back at him at the end of the prayer, he realised that they belonged to branches, near or distant, of the Ordway connections.

With the first glimpse of his figure in the doorway there came no movement of recognition; then he observed a slight start of surprise—or was it dismay? He knew that Lydia had seen him at last, though he did not look at her. It appeared to him suddenly that his return was an insult to her as well as to the dead man who lay there, helpless yet majestic, in the centre of the room. Flight seemed to him at the instant the only amendment in his power, and he had made an impulsive start back from the threshold, when the strained hush was broken by a word that left him trembling and white as from a blow.

"Father!" cried a voice, in the first uncontrollable joy of recognition; and with an impetuous rush through the crowd that surrounded her, Alice threw herself into his arms.

A mist swam before his eyes and he lost the encircling faces in a blur of tears; but as she clung to his breast and he held her close, he was conscious of a fierce joy that throbbed, like a physical pain, in his throat. The word which she had uttered had brought his soul up from the abyss as surely as if it were lifted by the hands of angels; and with each sobbing breath of happiness she drew, he felt that her nature was knit more firmly into his. The repulse he had received the moment before was forgotten, and while he held her drawn apart in the doorway, the silence of Lydia, and even the reproach of the dead man, had ceased to affect him. In that breathless, hysterical rush to his embrace Alice saved him to-day as Emily's outstretched hand had saved him three years before.

"They did not tell me! Oh, why, did they not tell me?" cried the girl, lifting her head from his breast, and the funeral hush that shrouded the room could not keep back the ecstasy in her voice. Even when after the first awkward instant the others gathered around him, nervous, effusive, friendly, Alice still clung to his hands, kissing first one and then the other and then both together, with the exquisite joyous abandonment of a child.

Lydia had kissed him, weeping softly under her long black veil, and hiding her pale, lovely face the moment afterwards in her clasped hands. Dick, his son, had touched his cheek with his fresh young mouth; Richard Ordway, his father's brother, had shaken him by the hand; and the others, one and all, kinsmen and kinswomen, had given him their embarrassed, yet kindly, welcome. But it was on Alice that his eyes rested, while he felt his whole being impelled toward her in a recovered rapture that was almost one of worship. In her dark beauty, with her splendid hair, her blue, flashing Ordway eyes, and her lips which were too red and too full for perfection, she appeared to him the one vital thing among the mourning figures in this house of death. Her delight still ran in little tremors through her limbs, and when a moment later, she slipped her hand through his arm, and followed Lydia and Richard Ordway down the steps, and into one of the waiting carriages, he felt that her bosom quivered with the emotion which the solemn presence of his father had forced back from her lips.

## CHAPTER II

### His Own Place

Some hours later when he sat alone in his room, he told himself that he could never forget the drive home from the cemetery in the closed carriage. Lydia had raised her veil slightly, as if in a desire for air, and as she sat with her head resting against the lowered blind, he could trace the delicate, pale lines of her mouth and chin, and a single wisp of her ash blond hair which lay heavily upon her forehead. Not once had she spoken, not once had she met his eyes of her own accord, and he had discovered that she leaned almost desperately upon the iron presence of Richard Ordway. Had his sin, indeed, crushed her until she had not power to lift her head? he asked passionately, with a sharper remorse than he had ever felt.

"I am glad that you were able to come in time," Richard Ordway remarked in his cold, even voice; and after this the rattle of the wheels on the cobblestones in the street was the only sound which broke the death-like stillness in which they sat. No, he could never forget it, nor could he forget the bewildering effect of the sunshine when they opened the carriage door. Beside the curbing a few idle Negroes were left of the crowd that had gathered to watch

the coffin borne through the gate, and the pavement was thick with dust, as if many hurrying feet had tramped by since the funeral had passed. As they entered the house the scent of lilies struck him afresh with all the agony of its associations. The shutters were still closed, the chairs were still arranged in their solemn circle, the streamer of crape, hurriedly untied from the bell handle, still lay where it had been thrown on the library table; and as he crossed the threshold, he trod upon some fading lilies which had fallen, unnoticed, from a funeral wreath. Then, in the dining-room, Richard Ordway poured out a glass of whiskey, and in the very instant when he was about to raise it to his lips, he put it hurriedly down and pushed the decanter aside with an embarrassed and furtive movement.

"Do you feel the need of a cup of coffee, Daniel?" he asked in a pleasant, conciliatory tone, "or will you have only a glass of seltzer?"

"I am not thirsty, thank you," Daniel responded shortly, and the next moment he asked Alice to show him the room in which he would stay.

With laughing eagerness she led him up the great staircase to the chamber in which he had slept as a boy.

"It 's just next to Dick's," she said, "and mother's and mine are directly across the hall. At first we thought of putting you in the red guest-room, but that 's only for visitors, so we knew you would be sure to like this better."

"Yes, I'll like this better," he responded, and

then as she would have moved away, he caught her, with a gesture of anguish, back to his arms.

"You remember me, Alice, my child? you have not forgotten me?"

She laughed merrily, biting her full red lips the moment afterward to check the sound.

"Why, how funny of you! I was quite a big girl—don't you remember?—when you went away. It was so dull afterwards that I cried for days, and that was why I was so overjoyed when mamma told me you would come back. It was never dull when you lived at home with us, because you would always take me to the park or the circus whenever I grew tired of dolls. Nobody did that after you went away and I used to cry and kick sometimes thinking that they would tell you and bring you back."

"And you remembered me chiefly because of the park and the circus?" he asked, smiling for joy, as he kissed her hand which lay on his sleeve.

"Oh, I never forget anything, you know. Mamma even says that about me. I remember my first nurse and the baker's boy with red cheeks who used to bring me pink cakes when I was three years old. No, I never forget—I never forget," she repeated with vehemence.

Animation had kindled her features into a beauty of colour which made her eyes bluer and brighter and softened the too intense contrast of her full, red lips.

"All these years I 've hoped that you would come back and that things would change," she said im-

pulsively, her words tripping rapidly over one another. "Everything is so dreadfully grave and solemn here. Grandfather hated noise so that he would hardly let me laugh if he was in the house. Then mamma's health is wrecked, and she lies always on the sofa, and never goes out except for a drive sometimes when it is fair."

"Mamma's health is wrecked?" he repeated inquiringly, as she paused.

"Oh, that 's what everybody says about her—her health is wrecked. And Uncle Richard is hardly any better, for he has a wife whose health is wrecked also. And Dick—he is n't sick, but he might as well be, he is so dull and plodding and over nice——"

"And you Alice?"

"I? Oh, I 'm not dull, but I 'm unhappy—awfully —you'll find that out. I like fun and pretty clothes and new people and strange places. I want to marry and have a home of my own and a lot of rings like mamma's, and a carriage with two men on the box, and to go to Europe to buy things whenever I please. That 's the way Molly Burridge does and she was only two classes ahead of me. How rough your hands are, papa, and what a funny kind of shirt you have on. Do people dress like that where you came from? Well, I don't like it, so you 'll have to change."

She had gone out at last, forgetting to walk properly in her mourning garments, tripping into a run on the threshold, and then checking herself with a prim, mocking look over her shoulder. Not until the door

had closed with a slam behind her black skirt, did Ordway's gaze turn from following her and fix itself on the long mirror between the windows, in which he could see, as Alice had seen the moment before, his roughened hands, his carelessly trimmed hair and his common clothes. He was dressed as the labourers dressed on Sundays in Tappahannock; though, he remembered now, that in that crude little town he had been conspicuous for the neatness, almost the jauntiness, of his attire. As he laid out presently on the bed his few poor belongings, he told himself, with determination, that for Alice's sake even this must be changed. He was no longer of the class of Baxter, of Banks, of Mrs. Twine. All that was over, and he must return now into the world in which his wife and his children had kept a place. To do Alice honour—at least not to do her further shame—would become from this day, he realised, the controlling motive of his life. Then, as he looked down at the coarse, unshapely garments upon the delicate counterpane, he knew that Daniel Smith and Daniel Ordway were now parted forever.

He was still holding one of the rough blue shirts in his hand, when a servant entered to inquire if there was anything that he might need. The man, a bright young mulatto, was not one of the old family slaves; and while he waited, alert and intelligent, upon the threshold, Ordway was seized by a nervous feeling that he was regarded with curiosity and suspicion by the black rolling eyes.

"Where is uncle Boaz? He used to wait upon me," he asked.

"He's daid, suh. He drapped down daid right on de do' step."

"And Aunt Mirandy?"

"She 's daid, too, en' I 'se her chile."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said Ordway, and he had again the sensation that he was watched through inquisitive eyes. "That is all now," he added presently, "you may go," and it was with a long breath of relief that he saw the door close after the figure of Aunt Mirandy's son.

When a little later he dressed himself and went out into the hall, he found, to his annoyance, that he walked with a cautious and timid step like that of a labourer who has stumbled by accident into surroundings of luxury. As he descended the wide curving staircase, with his hand on the mahogany balustrade, the sound of his footsteps seemed to reverberate disagreeably through the awful funereal silence in which he moved. If he could only hear Alice's laugh, Dick's whistle, or even the garrulous flow of the Negro voices that he had listened to in his childhood. With a pang he recalled that Uncle Boaz was dead, and his heart swelled as he remembered how often he had passed up and down this same staircase on the old servant's shoulder. At that age he had felt no awe of the shining emptiness and the oppressive silence. Then he had believed himself to be master of all at which he looked; now he was conscious of that complete detachment from his

surroundings which produces almost a sense of the actual separation of soul and body.

Reaching the hall below, he found that some hurried attempt had been made to banish or to conceal the remaining signs of the funeral. The doors and windows were open, the shreds of crape had disappeared from the carpet, and the fading lilies had been swept out upon the graveled walk in the yard. Upon entering the library, which invited him by its rows of calf-bound books, he discovered that Richard Ordway was patiently awaiting him in the large red leather chair which had once been the favourite seat of his father.

"Before I go home, I think it better to have a little talk with you, Daniel," began the old man, as he motioned to a sofa on the opposite side of the Turkish rug before the open grate. "It has been a peculiar satisfaction to me to feel that I was able to bring you back in time for the service."

"I came," replied Daniel slowly, "as soon as I received your telegram." He hesitated an instant and then went on in the same quiet tone in which the other had spoken, "Do you think, though, that he would have wished me to come at all?"

After folding the newspaper which he had held in his hand, Richard laid it, with a courteous gesture upon the table beside him. As he sat there with his long limbs outstretched and relaxed, and his handsome, severe profile resting against the leather back of his chair, the younger man was impressed, as if for the first time, by the curious mixture of

strength and refinement in his features. He was not only a cleverer man than his brother had been, he was gentler, smoother, more distinguished on every side. In spite of his reserve, it was evident that he had wished to be kind — that he wished it still; yet this kindness was so removed from the ordinary impulse of humanity that it appeared to his nephew to be in a way as detached and impersonal as an abstract virtue. The very lines of his face were drawn with the precision, the finality, of a geometrical figure. To imagine that they could melt into tenderness was as impossible as to conceive of their finally crumbling into dust.

"He would have wished it — he did wish it," he said, after a minute. "I talked with him only a few hours before his death, and he told me then that it was necessary to send for you — that he felt that he had neglected his duty in not bringing you home immediately after your release. He saw at last that it would have been far better to have acted as I strongly advised at the time."

"It was his desire, then, that I should return?" asked Daniel, while a stinging moisture rose to his eyes at the thought that he had not looked once upon the face of the dead man. "I wish I had known."

A slight surprise showed in the other's gesture of response, and he glanced hastily away as he might have done had he chanced to surprise his nephew while he was still without his boots or his shirt.

"I think he realised before he died that the individual has no right to place his personal pride above

the family tie," he resumed quietly, ignoring the indecency of emotion as he would have ignored, probably, the unclothed body. "I had said much the same thing to him eight years ago, when I told him that he would realise before his death that he was not morally free to act as he had done with regard to you. As a matter of fact," he observed in his trained, legal voice, "the family is, after all, the social unit, and each member is as closely related as the eye to the ear or the right arm to the left. It is illogical to speak of denying one's flesh and blood, for it can't be done."

So this was why they had received him. He turned his head away, and his gaze rested upon the boughs of the great golden poplar beyond the window.

"It is understood, then," he asked "that I am to come back — back to this house to live?"

When he had finished, but not until then, Richard Ordway looked at him again with his dry, conventional kindness. "If you are free," he began, altering the word immediately lest it should suggest painful associations to his companion's mind, "I mean if you have no other binding engagements, no decided plans for the future."

"No, I have made no other plans. I was working as a book-keeper in a tobacco warehouse in Tappahannock."

"As a book-keeper?" repeated Richard, as he glanced down inquiringly at the other's hands.

"Oh, I worked sometimes out of doors, but the position I held was that of confidential clerk."

The old man nodded amiably, accepting the explanation with a readiness for which the other was not prepared. "I was about to offer you some legal work in my office," he remarked. "Dry and musty stuff, I fear it is, but it's better—isn't it?—for a man to have some kind of occupation——"

Though the words were uttered pleasantly enough, it seemed to the younger man that the concluding and significant phrase was left unspoken. "Some kind of occupation to keep you out of tempation" was what Richard had meant to say—what he had withheld, from consideration, if not from humanity. While the horror of the whole situation closed over Daniel like a mental darkness, he remembered the sensitive shrinking of Lydia on the drive home, the prying, inquisitive eyes of the mulatto servant, the furtive withdrawal of the whiskey by the man who sat opposite to him. With all its attending humiliation and despair, there rushed upon him the knowledge that by the people of his own household he was regarded still as a creature to be restrained and protected at every instant. Though outwardly they had received him, instinctively they had repulsed him. The thing which stood between them and himself was neither of their making nor of his. It belonged to their very nature and was woven in with their inner fibre. It was a creation, not of the individual, but of the race, and the law by which it existed was rooted deep in the racial structure. Tradition, inheritance, instinct—these were the barriers through which he had broken and which had

closed like the impenetrable sea-gates behind him. Though he were to live on day by day as a saint among them, they could never forget: though he were to shed his heart's blood for them, they would never believe. To convince them of his sincerity was more hopeless, he understood, than to reanimate their affection. In their very forgiveness they had not ceased to condemn him, and in the shelter which they offered him there would be always a hidden restraint. With the thought it seemed to him that he was stifling in the closeness of the atmosphere, that he must break away again, that he must find air and freedom, though it cost him all else besides. The possibility of his own weakness seemed created in him by their acceptance of it; and he felt suddenly a terror lest the knowledge of their suspicion should drive him to justify it by his future in Botetourt.

"Yes, it is better for me to work," he said aloud. "I hope that I shall be able to make myself of some small use in your office."

"There's no doubt of that, I'm sure," responded Richard, in his friendliest tone.

"It is taken for granted, then, that I shall live on here with my wife and children?"

"We have decided that it is best. But as for your wife, you must remember that she is very much of an invalid. Do not forget that she has had a sad—a most tragic life."

"I promise you that I shall not forget it—make your mind easy."

After this it seemed to Daniel that there was

nothing further to be said; but before rising from his chair, the old man sat for a moment with his thin lips tightly folded and a troubled frown ruffling his forehead. In the dim twilight the profile outlined against the leather chair appeared to have been ground rather than roughly hewn out of granite.

"About the disposition of the estate, there were some changes made shortly before your father's death," remarked Richard presently. "In the will itself you were not mentioned; a provision was made for your wife and the bulk of the property left to your two children. But in a codicil, which was added the day before your father died, he directed that you should be given a life interest in the house as well as in investments to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This is to be paid you in the form of a quarterly allowance, which will yield you a personal income of about six thousand a year."

"I understand," replied the younger man, without emotion, almost without surprise. At the moment he was wondering by what name his father had alluded to him in his will. Had he spoken of him as "my son," or merely as "Daniel Ordway"?

"That is all, I think," remarked the other, with a movement which expressed, in spite of him, a sensation of relief. With a smile which appeared to be little more than a muscular contraction of his mouth, he held out his hand and stood for a moment, vainly searching for a phrase or a word that would fit the delicate requirements of the occasion.

"Well, I shall never cease to be thankful that you were with us at the cemetery," he said at last in a tone which was a patent admission that he had failed. Then, with a kindly inclination of his head, he released the hand he held and passed at his rapid, yet dignified step out of the house.

## CHAPTER III

### The Outward Pattern

The front door had hardly closed when a breath of freshness blew into the library with the entrance of Alice, and a moment afterwards the butler rolled back the mahogany doors of the dining-room and they saw the lighted candles and the chrysanthemums upon the dinner table.

"We hardly ever dress," said Alice, slipping her hand through his arm, "I wish we did."

"Well, if you 'll only pardon these clothes to-night I 'll promise to call on the tailor before breakfast," he returned, smiling, conscious that he watched in anxiety lest the look of delight in his presence should vanish from her face.

"Oh, it does n't matter now, because we 're in the deepest grief—are n't we?—and mamma is n't coming down. She wants to see you, by the way, just for a minute when you go upstairs. It is to be just for a minute, I was to be very particular about that, as she is broken down. I wonder why they have put so many covers. There is nobody but you and Dick. I asked Uncle Richard, but he said that he would n't stay. It 's just as well he did n't—he 's so dreadfully dull, is n't he, papa?"

"All I wish is that I were dull in Uncle Richard's

way," remarked Dick, with his boyish air of superiority, "I'd be the greatest lawyer in the state then, when my turn came."

"And you'd be even more tiresome than you are now," retorted the girl with a flash of irritation which brought out three fine, nervous wrinkles on her delicate forehead.

"Well, I shouldn't have your temper anyway," commented Dick imperturbably, as he ate his soup. "Do you remember, papa, how Alice used to bite and scratch as a baby? She'd like to behave exactly that way now if she weren't so tall."

"Oh, I know Alice better than you do," said Ordway, in a voice which he tried to make cheerful. The girl sat on his right, and while she choked back her anger, he reached out and catching her hand, held it against his cheek. "We stand together, Alice and I," he said softly—"Alice and I."

As he repeated the words a wave of joy rose in his heart, submerging the disappointment, the bitterness, the hard despair, of the last few hours. Here also, as well as in Tappahannock, he found awaiting him his appointed task.

Dick laughed pleasantly, preserving always the unshakable self-possession which reminded his father of Richard Ordway. He was a good boy, Daniel knew, upright, honest, manly, all the things which his grandfather and his great-grandfather had been before him.

"Then you'll have to stand with Geoffrey Heath,"

he said jestingly, "and, by Jove, I don't think I'd care for his company."

"Geoffrey Heath?" repeated Ordway inquiringly, with his eyes on his daughter, who sat silent and angry, biting her lower lip. Her mouth, which he had soon discovered to be her least perfect feature, was at the same time her most expressive one. At her slightest change of mood, he watched it tremble into a smile or a frown, and from a distance it was plainly the first thing one noticed about her face. Now, as she sat there, with her eyes on her plate, her vivid lips showed like a splash of carmine in the lustreless pallor of her skin.

"Oh, he's one of Alice's chums," returned Dick with his merciless youthful sneer, "she has a pretty lot of them, too, though he is by long odds the worst."

"Well, he 's rich enough anyway," protested Alice defiantly, "he keeps beautiful horses and sends me boxes of candy, and I don't care a bit for the rest."

"Who is he, by the way?" asked Daniel. "There was a family of Heaths who lived near us in the country when I was a boy. Is he one of these?"

"He 's the son of old Rupert Heath, who made a million out of some panic in stocks. Uncle Richard says the father was all right, but he 's tried his best to break up Alice's craze about Geoffrey. But let her once get her nose to the wind and nobody can do anything with her."

"Well, I can, can't I, darling?" asked Ordway, smiling in spite of a jealous pang. The appeal of the

girl to him was like the appeal of the finer part of his own nature. Her temptations he recognised as the old familiar temptations of his youth, and the kinship between them seemed at the moment something deeper and more enduring than the tie of blood. Yet the thought that she was his daughter awoke in him a gratitude that was almost as acute as pain. The emptiness of his life was filled suddenly to overflowing, and he felt again that he had found here as he had found at Tappahannock both his mission and his reward.

When dinner was over he left the boy and girl in the library and went slowly, and with a nervous hesitation, upstairs to the room in which Lydia was lying on her couch, with a flower-decked tray upon the little inlaid table beside her. As he entered the room something in the luxurious atmosphere—in the amber satin curtains, the white bearskin rugs, the shining mirrors between the windows—recalled the early years of his marriage, and as he remembered them, he realised for the first time the immensity of the change which divided his present existence from his past. The time had been when he could not separate his inner life from his surroundings, and with the thought he saw in his memory the bare cleanliness of the blue guest-room at Cedar Hill—with its simple white bed, its rag carpet, its faded sampler worked in blue worsteds. That place had become as a sanctuary to him now, for it was there that he had known his most perfect peace, his completest reconciliation with God.

As he entered the room Lydia raised herself slightly upon her elbow, and without turning her head, nervously pushed back a white silk shawl which she had thrown over her knees. A lamp with an amber shade cast its light on her averted profile, and he noticed that its perfect outline, its serene loveliness, was untouched by suffering. Already he had discovered those almost imperceptible furrows between Alice's eyebrows, but when Lydia looked up at him at last, he saw that her beautiful forehead, under its parting of ash blond hair, was as smooth as a child's. Was it merely the Madonna-like arrangement of her hair, after all, he wondered, not without bitterness, that had bestowed upon her that appealing expression of injured innocence?

"You wished to speak to me, Alice said," he began with an awkward gesture, acutely conscious, as he stood there, of the amber light in the room, of the shining waves of her hair, of the delicate perfume which floated from the gold-topped boxes upon her dressing-table. An oval mirror above the mantel gave back to him the reflection of his own roughly clad figure, and the violent contrast between himself and his surroundings stung him into a sense of humiliation that was like a physical smart.

"I thought it better to speak to you — Uncle Richard and Dick advised me to ——" she broke off in a gentle confusion, lifting her lovely, pensive eyes for the first time to his face.

"Of course it is better, Lydia," he answered gravely. "You must let me know what you wish —

you must tell me quite frankly just what you would rather that I should do——"

The look of gratitude in her face gave him a sudden inexplicable pang.

"I am hardly more than an invalid," she said in a voice that had grown firm and sweet, "Uncle Richard will tell you——"

Her reliance upon Richard Ordway aroused in him a passion of resentment, and for an instant the primitive man in him battled hotly against the renunciation his lips had made.

"I know, I understand," he said hurriedly at last. "I appreciate it all and I shall do whatever is in my power to make it easier for you." As he looked at her bowed head a wave of remorse rose in his breast and swept down, one by one, the impulses of anger, of pride, of self-righteousness. "O my dear, my dear, don't you think I know what I have done to you?" he asked, and going a step toward her, he fell on his knees beside the couch and kissed passionately the hand that lay in her lap. "Don't you think I know that I have ruined your life?"

For a moment her eyes dwelt thoughtfully upon his, and she let her hand lie still beneath his remorseful kisses, until her withdrawal of it had lost any appearance of haste or of discourtesy.

"Then you will not object to my living on in this way? You will not seek to change anything? You will——" She hesitated and broke off, not impulsively, but with the same clear, sweet voice in which she had put her question.

Lifting his head, he looked up at her from his knees, and the dumb loneliness in his eyes caused her at last to drop her own to the rug upon which he knelt.

"If you will only let me care for you — serve you — work for you," he implored brokenly. "If you will only let me make up, however poorly, something of what you have suffered."

A vague discomfort, produced in her by the intensity of his gaze, moved her to draw slightly away from him, while she turned restlessly on her pillows. At the first shade of perplexity, of annoyance, that showed in her face, he felt, with a terrible power of intuition, that she was seeking in vain to estimate each of his heartbroken words at its full value — to read calmly by the light of experience the passion for atonement to which his lips had tried hopelessly to give expression. The wall of personality rose like a visible object between them. He might beat against it in desperation until his strength was gone, yet he knew that it would remain forever impenetrable, and through its thickness there would pass only the loud, unmeaning sound of each other's voice.

"Have you lost all love for me, Lydia?" he asked. "Have you even forgotten that I am the father of your children?"

As soon as his words were uttered, he stumbled to his feet, horrified by the effect upon her. A change that was like a spasm of physical nausea had shaken her limbs, and he felt rather than saw that she had shrunk from him, convulsed and quivering, until

she was crushed powerless against the back of the sofa on which she lay. Her whole attitude, he realised, was the result, not of a moral judgment, but of a purely physical antipathy. Her horror of him had become instinctive, and she was no more responsible for its existence than a child is responsible for the dread aroused in it by the goblins of nursery rhymes. His life as a convict had not only unclassed him in her eyes, it had put him entirely outside and below the ordinary relations of human beings. To his wife he must remain forever an object of pity, perhaps, but of intense loathing and fear also.

The wave of remorse turned to bitterness on his lips, and all the tenderer emotions he had felt when he knelt by her side — the self-reproach, the spiritual yearning, the passion for goodness, all these were extinguished in the sense of desolation which swept over him.

"Don't be afraid," he said coldly, "I shall not touch you."

"It was nothing—a moment's pain," she answered, in a wistful, apologetic voice.

She was playing nervously with the fringe of the silk shawl, and he stood for a minute in silence while he watched her long, slender fingers twine themselves in and out of the tasseled ends. Then turning aside she pushed away the coffee service on the little table as if its fragrance annoyed her.

"Is it in your way? Do you wish it removed?" he inquired, and when she had nodded in reply, he

lifted the tray and carried it in the direction of the door. "Don't be afraid. It is all right," he repeated as he went out.

Back in his own room again, he asked himself desperately if this existence could be possible? Would it not be better for him to lose himself a second time—to throw in his lot with a lower class, since his own had rejected him? Flinging himself on the floor beside the window, he pressed his forehead against the white painted wood as if the outward violence could deaden the throbbing agony he felt within. Again he smelt the delicate, yet intense perfume of Lydia's chamber; again he saw her shrinking from him until she lay crushed and white against the back of the sofa; again he watched her features contract with the instinctive repulsion she could not control. The pitiful deprecating gesture with which she had murmured: "It is nothing—a moment's pain," was seared forever like the mark from a burning iron into his memory.

"No, no—it cannot be—it is impossible," he said suddenly aloud. And though he had not the strength to frame the rest of his thought into words, he knew that the impossible thing he meant was this life, this torture, this slow martyrdom day by day without hope and without end except in death. After all there was a way of escape, so why should it be closed to him? What were these people to him beside those others whom he might yet serve—the miserable, the poor, the afflicted who would take from him the gifts which his own had rejected?

What duty remained? What obligation? What responsibility? Step by step he retraced the nineteen years of his marriage, and he understood for the first time, that Lydia had given him on her wedding day nothing of herself beyond the gentle, apologetic gesture which had followed that evening her involuntary repulsion. From the beginning to the end she had presided always above, not shared in his destiny. She had wanted what he could give, but not himself, and when he could give nothing more she had shown that she wanted him no longer. While he knelt there, still pressing his forehead against the window sill, the image of her part in his life rose out of the darkness of his mind, which opened and closed over it, and he saw her fixed, shining and immovable, to receive his offerings, like some heathen deity above the sacrificial altar.

The next instant the image faded and was replaced by Emily as she had looked at him on that last evening with her soft, comforting gaze. The weakness of self pity came over him, and he asked himself in the coward's luxury of hopeless questioning, what Emily would have done had she stood to him in Lydia's place? He saw her parting from him with her bright courage at the prison doors; he saw her meeting him with her smile of welcome and of forgiveness when he came out. As once before he had risen to the vision of service, so now in the agony of his humiliation he was blessed at last with the understanding of love.

For many minutes he knelt there motionless by

the open window, beyond which he could see the dimly lighted town on which a few drops of rain had begun to fall. The faint perfume of lilies came up to him from the walk below, where the broken sprays swept from the house were fading under the slow, soft rain. With the fragrance the image of Emily dissolved as in a mist to reappear the minute afterwards in a more torturing and human shape. He saw her now with her bright dark hair blown into little curls on her temples, with her radiant brown eyes that penetrated him with their soft, yet animated glance. The vigorous grace of her figure, as he had seen it outlined in her scant blue cotton gown against the background of cedars, remained motionless in his thoughts, bathed in a clear golden light that tormented his senses.

Rising from his knees with an effort, he struck a match and raised the green shade from the lamp on the table. Then while the little blue flame flickered out in his hand, he felt that he was seized by a frantic, an irresistible impulse of flight. Gathering his clothes from the bed in the darkness, he pushed them hurriedly back into the bag he had emptied, and with a last glance at the room which had become unendurable to him, opened the door and went with a rapid step down the great staircase and into the hall below. The direction of his journey, as well as the purpose of it, was obscure in his mind. Yesterday he had told himself that he could not remain in Tappahannock, and to-day he knew that it was impossible for him to live on in his father's

house. To pass the hall door meant release—escape to him; beyond that there lay only the distance and the unknown.

The lights burned dimly on the staircase, and when he reached the bottom he could see on the carpet the thin reddish stream which issued from the closed door of the library. As he was about to pass by, a short sob fell on his ear, arresting him as authoritatively as if it had been the sound of his own name. While he stood there listening the sobs ceased and then broke out more loudly, now violent, now smothered, now followed by quick, furious steps across the floor within. Alice was shut in the room alone and suffering! With the realisation the bag fell from his hand, and turning the knob softly, he opened the door and paused for an instant upon the threshold.

At the noise of the opening door the girl made a single step forward, and as she raised her hands to conceal her distorted features, her handkerchief, torn into shreds, fell to the carpet at her feet. Around her the room showed other signs of an outbreak of anger — the chairs were pushed hurriedly out of place, the books from the centre table were lying with opened backs on the floor, and a vase of dahlias lay overturned and scattered upon the mantel.

"I don't care—I don't care," she repeated, convulsively. "Why do they always interfere with me? What right has Dick or Uncle Richard to say whom I shall see or whom I shall not? I hate them all. Mamma is always against me — so is Uncle Richard —

so is everybody. They side with Dick — always — always."

A single wave of her dark hair had fallen low on her forehead, and this, with the violent colour of her mouth, gave her a look that was almost barbaric. The splendid possibilities in her beauty caused him, in the midst of his pity, a sensation of dread.

"Alice," he said softly, almost in a whisper, and closing the door after him, he came to the middle of the room and stood near her, though still without touching her quivering body.

"They side with Dick always," she repeated furiously, "and you will side with him, too — you will side with him, too!"

For a long pause he looked at her in silence, waiting until the convulsive tremors of her limbs should cease.

"I shall never side against my daughter," he said very slowly. "Alice, my child, my darling, are you not really mine?"

A last quivering sob shook through her and she grew suddenly still. "They will tell you things about me and you will believe them," she answered sternly.

"Against you, Alice? Against you?"

"You will blame me as they do."

"I love you," he returned, almost as sternly as she had spoken.

An emotional change, so swift that it startled him, broke in her look, and he saw the bright red of her mouth tremble and open like a flower in her glowing face. At the sight a sharp joy took possession

of him — a joy that he could measure only by the depth of the agony out of which he had come. Without moving from his place, he stretched out his arms and stood waiting.

"Alice, I love you," he said.

Then his arms closed over her, for with the straight flight of a bird she had flown to his breast.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Letter and the Spirit

Awaking before dawn, he realised with his first conscious thought that his life had been irrevocably settled while he slept. His place was here; he could not break away from it without leaving a ragged edge; and while he had believed himself to be deciding his future actions, that greater Destiny, of which his will was only a part, had arranged them for him during the dim pause of the night. He could feel still on his arm, as if it had persisted there through his sleep, the firm, almost viselike pressure of Alice's hands, and his whole sensitive nature thrilled in response to this mute appeal to his fatherhood. Yes, his purpose, his mission, and his happiness were here in his father's house.

At breakfast he found a white rosebud on his plate, and as he took it up, Alice rushed in from the garden and threw herself into his arms.

"I thought you were never, never coming down!" she exclaimed, choking with laughter, and utterly forgetful of the shadow of death which still lay over the house. "At first I was afraid you might have gone away in the night — just as you went that awful day eight years ago. Then I peeped out and saw your boots, so I went back to bed again and fell asleep.

Oh, I 'm so glad you 've come! Why did you stay away such an age? Now, at last, I 'll have somebody to take my side against mamma and Dick and Uncle Richard ——"

"But why against them, Alice? Surely they love you just as I do?"

Biting her lips sharply, she bent her heavy brows in a stern and frowning expression. "Oh, they 're horrid," she said angrily, "they want me to live just as mamma does — shut up all day in a hot room on a hateful sofa. She reads novels all the time, and I despise books. I want to go away and see things and to have plenty of clothes and all the fun I choose. They let Dick do just as he pleases because he's a boy, but they try to make me dull and stupid and foolish all because I 'm a girl. I won't have it like that and it makes them angry ——"

"Oh, well, we'll have fun together, you and I," returned Ordway, with a sinking heart, "but you must wait a bit till I catch up with you. Don't be in a precious hurry, if you please."

"Shall we have a good time, then? Shall we?" she persisted, delighted, kissing him with her warm mouth until he was dazzled by her beauty, her fascination, her ardent vitality. "And you will do just what I wish, won't you?" she whispered in his ear as she hung on his shoulder, "you will be good and kind always? and you will make them leave me alone about Geoffrey Heath?"

"About Geoffrey Heath?" he repeated, and grew suddenly serious.

"Oh, he 's rich and he 's fun, too," she responded irritably. "He has asked me to ride one of his horses — the most beautiful chestnut mare in the world — but mamma scolds me about it because she says he 's not nice and that he did something once years ago about cards. As if I cared about cards!"

By the fear that had gripped him he could judge the strength of her hold on his heart. "Alice, be careful — promise me to be careful!" he entreated.

At his words he felt her arms relax from their embrace, and she seemed instantly to turn to marble upon his breast. "Oh, you 're just like the others now. I knew you would be!" she exclaimed, as she drew away from him.

Before the coldness of her withdrawal he felt that his will went out of him; and in one despairing flight of imagination he saw what the loss of her affection would mean now in his life. An emotion which he knew to be weakness pervaded not only his heart, but his soul and his senses and the remotest fibre of his physical being. "Whatever comes I shall always stand by you, Alice," he said.

Though she appeared to be mollified by his subjection, the thin almost imperceptible furrows caused by the moment's anger, were still visible between her eyebrows. There was a certain fascination, he found, in watching these marks of age or of experience come and go on her fresh, childlike forehead, with its lustrous pallor, from which her splendid dark hair rolled back, touched with light, like a moonlit cloud. It was a singular characteristic of her beauty that its

appeal was rather to the imagination than to the eye, and the moments, perhaps, when she dazzled least were those in which she conquered most through her enigmatical charm.

"You will buy some clothes, first of all, will you not?" she said, when, having finished his breakfast, he rose from the table and went out into the hall.

He met her eyes laughing, filled with happiness at the playful authority she assumed, and yet fearful still lest some incautious word of his should bring out those fine nervous wrinkles upon her forehead.

"Give me a week and I 'll promise you a fashion plate," he responded gaily, kissing his hand to her as he went down the steps, and, under the trailing rose creepers at the gate, out into the street.

Rain had fallen in the night, and the ground was covered with shining puddles beneath which a few autumn leaves showed drenched and beaten. From the golden and red maples above a damp odour was wafted down into his face by the October wind, which now rose and now died away with a gentle sound. In the pale sunshine, which had not yet drained the moisture from the bricks, a wonderful freshness seemed to emanate from the sky and the earth and the white-pillared houses.

As he approached the corner, he heard his name called in a clear emphatic voice from the opposite sidewalk, and turning his head, he saw hastening toward him, a little elderly lady in a black silk gown trimmed heavily with bugles. As she neared him, followed by a young Negro maid bearing a market

basket filled with vegetables, he recognised her as an intimate friend of his mother's, whom he had known familiarly in his childhood as "Aunt Lucy." It seemed so long now since his mother's death that he was attacked by a ghostly sensation, as if he were dreaming over his past life, while he stood face to face with the old lady's small soldierly figure and listened to the crisp, emphatic tones in which she welcomed him back to Botetourt. He remembered his frequent visits to her solemn old house, which she kept so dark that he had always stumbled over the two embroidered ottomans on the parlour hearth. He recalled the smell of spices which had hung about her storeroom, and the raspberry preserves which she had never failed to give him out of a blue china jar.

"Why, my dear, blessed child, it 's such a pleasure to have you back!" she exclaimed now with an effusion which he felt to be the outward veil of some hidden embarrassment. "You must come sometimes and let me talk to you about your mother. I knew your mother so well — I was one of her bridesmaids."

Seizing his arm in her little firm, clawlike hands, she assured him with animation of her delight at his return, alluding in a shaking voice to his mother, and urging him to come to sit with her whenever he could stand the gloom of her empty house.

"And you will give me raspberry preserves out of the blue china jar?" he asked, laughing, "and let me feed crackers to the green parrot?"

"What a boy! What a boy!" she returned. "You remember everything. The parrot is dead — my poor Polly! — but there is a second."

Her effusiveness, her volubility, which seemed to him to be the result of concealed embarrassment, produced in him presently a feeling of distrust, almost of resentment, and he remembered the next instant that, in his childhood, she had been looked upon as a creature of uncontrolled charitable impulses. Upon the occasion of his last meeting with her was she not hastening upon some ministering errand to the city gaol? At the casual recollection an unreasoning bitterness awoke in his mind; her reiterated raptures fell with a strange effect of irritation upon his ears; and he knew now that he could never bring himself to enter her house again, that he could never accept her preserved raspberries out of the blue china jar. Her reception of him, he saw, was but a part of the general reception of Botetourt. Like her the town would be voluble, unnatural, overdone in its kindness, hiding within itself a furtive constraint as if it addressed its speeches to the sensitive sufferer from some incurable malady. The very tenderness, the exaggerated sympathy in its manner would hardly have been different, he understood, if he had been recently discharged as harmless, yet half-distraught, from an asylum for the insane.

As the days went on this idea, instead of dissolving, became unalterably lodged in his brain. Gradually he retreated further and further into himself, until the spiritual isolation in which he lived appeared to

him more and more like the isolation of the prison. His figure had become a familiar one in the streets of Botetourt, yet he lived bodily among the people without entering into their lives or sharing in any degree the emotions that moved their hearts. Only in periods of sorrow did he go willingly into the houses of those of his own class, though he had found a way from the beginning to reach the poor, the distressed, or the physically afflicted. His tall, slightly stooping figure, in its loose black clothes, his dark head, with the thick locks of iron gray hair upon the temples, his sparkling blue eyes, his bright, almost boyish smile, and the peculiar, unforgettable charm of his presence — these were the things which those in sickness or poverty began to recognise and to look for. In his own home he lived, except for the fitful tenderness of Alice, as much apart as he felt himself to be in the little town. They were considerate of him, but their consideration, he knew, contained an ineradicable suspicion, and in the house as outside, he was surrounded by the watchful regard that is given to the infirm or the mentally diseased. He read this in Lydia's gently averted eyes; he felt it in Richard Ordway's constrained manner; he detected it even in the silent haste with which the servants fulfilled his slightest wish.

His work in his uncle's office, he had soon found to be of the most mechanical character, a mere pretext to give him daily employment, and he told himself, in a moment of bitterness that it was convincing proof of the opinion which the older man must hold

of his honesty or of his mental capacity. It became presently little more than a hopeless round to him — this morning walk through the sunny streets, past the ivied walls of the old church, to the clean, varnish scented office, where he sat, until the luncheon hour, under the hard, though not unkind, eyes of the man who reminded him at every instant of his dead father. And the bitterest part of it, after all, was that the closer he came to the character of Richard Ordway, the profounder grew his respect for his uncle's unwavering professional honour. The old man would have starved, he knew, rather than have held back a penny that was not legally his own or have owed a debt that he felt had begun to weigh, however lightly, upon his conscience. Yet this lawyer of scrupulous rectitude was the husband, his nephew suspected, of a neglected, a wretchedly unhappy wife — a small, nervous creature, whom he had married, shortly after the death of his first wife, some twenty years ago. The secret of this unhappiness Daniel had discovered almost by intuition on the day of his father's funeral, when he had looked up suddenly in the cemetery to find his uncle's wife regarding him with a pair of wonderful, pathetic eyes, which seemed to gaze at him sadly out of a blue mist. So full of sympathy and understanding was her look that the memory of it had returned to him more than a year later, and had caused him to stop at her gate one November afternoon as he was returning from his office work. After an instant's pause, and an uncertain glance at the

big brick house with its clean white columns, he ascended the steps and rang the bell for the first time since his boyhood.

The house was one of the most charming in Botetourt, but as he followed the servant down the hall to the library, it seemed to him that all these high, imposing walls, with their fine white woodwork, enclosed but so much empty space to fill with loneliness. His uncle had no children, and the sad, fair-haired little wife appeared to be always alone and always suffering.

She was seated now in a low rocking-chair beside the window, and as she turned her head at his entrance, he could see, through the lace curtains, a few pale November leaves, which fluttered down from an elm tree beside the porch. When she looked at him he noticed that her eyes were large and beautiful and of a changeable misty colour which appeared now gray, now violet.

"It is so good of you, Daniel," she said, in a soft, grateful voice, removing her work-basket from the chair at her side so that he might come within the reach of her short-sighted gaze.

"I 've wanted to come ever since I saw you for the first time after my return," he answered cheerfully. "It is strange, is n't it?—that I hardly remember you when I lived here. You were always ill, were you not?"

"Yes, ill almost always," she replied, smiling as she met his glance. "When you were married I remember I could n't go to the wedding because I

had been in bed for three months. But that 's all over now." she added, fearing to produce in him a momentary depression. "I am well again, you see, so the past does n't matter."

"The past does n't matter," he repeated in a low voice, struck by the words as if they held more than their surface meaning for his ears.

She nodded gravely. "How can it matter if one is really happy at last."

"And you are happy at last?"

As he watched her it seemed to him that a pale flame burned in her face, tinging its sallow wanness with a golden light. "I am at peace and is that not happiness?" she asked.

"But you were sad once — that day in the cemetery? I felt it."

"That was while I was still struggling," she answered, "and it always hurts one to struggle. I wanted happiness — I kept on wanting it even after I ceased to believe in its existence. I fought very hard — oh, desperately hard — but now I have learned that the only way to get anything is to give it up. Happiness is like everything else, it is only when one gives it back to God that one really possesses it"

He had never seen a face in which the soul spoke so clearly, and her look rather than her words came to him like the touch of divine healing.

"When I saw you standing beside your father's grave, I knew that you were just where I had been for so many years — that you were still telling your

self that things were too hard, that they were unendurable. I had been through it all, you see, so I understood."

"But how could you know the bitterness, the shame of feeling that it was all the result of my own mistake — of my own sin."

Taking his hand in hers, she sat for a moment in silence with her ecstatic gaze fixed on his face. "I know that in spite of your sin you are better than they are," she said at last, "because your sin was on the outside — a thing to be sloughed off and left far behind, while their self-righteouness is of their very souls ——"

"Oh, hush, hush," he interrupted sternly, "they have forgiven me for what I did, that is enough."

"Sixteen years ago," she returned, dropping her voice, "my husband forgave me in the same way, and he has never forgotten it."

At his start of surprise, he felt that she clung the more closely to the hand she held. "Oh, it was n't so big a thing," she went on, "I had been married to him for five years, and I was very unhappy when I met someone who seemed to understand and to love me. For a time I was almost insane with the wonder and delight of it — I might have gone away with him — with the other — in my first rapture, had not Richard found it all out two days before. He behaved very generously — he forgave me. I should have been happier," she added a little wistfully, "if he had not."

As she broke off trembling, he lifted her hand

to his lips, kissing it with tenderness, almost with passion. "Then that was the beginning of your unhappiness — of your long illness!" he exclaimed.

She nodded smiling, while a tear ran slowly down her flushed cheek. "He forgave me sixteen years ago and he has never allowed me to forget it one hour — hardly a minute since."

"Then you understand how bitter — how intolerable it is!" he returned in an outbreak of anger.

"I thought I knew," she replied more firmly than he had ever heard her speak, "but I learned afterwards that it was a mistake. I see now that they are kind — that they are good in their way, and I love them for it. It is n't our way, I know, but the essence of charity, after all, is to learn to appreciate goodness in all its expressions, no matter how different they may be from our own. Even Richard is kind — he means everything for the best, and it is only his nature that is straightened—that is narrow — not his will. I felt bitterly once, but not now because I am so happy at last."

Beyond the pale outline of her head, he saw the elm leaves drifting slowly down, and beyond them the low roofs and the dim church spires of the quiet town. Was it possible that even here he might find peace in the heart of the storm?

"It is only since I have given my happiness back to God that it is really mine," she said, and it seemed to him again that her soul gathered brightness and shone in her face.

## CHAPTER V

### The Will of Alice

When he reached home the servant who helped him out of his overcoat, informed him at the same time that his uncle awaited him in the library. With the news a strange chill came over him as if he had left something warm and bright in the November sunset outside. For an instant it seemed to him that he must turn back—that he could not go forward. Then with a gesture of assent, he crossed the hall and entered the library, where he found Lydia and the children as well as Richard Ordway.

The lamps were unlit, and the mellow light of the sunset fell through the interlacing half-bared boughs of the golden poplar beyond the window. This light, so rich, so vivid, steeped the old mahogany furniture and the faded family portraits in a glow which seemed to Daniel to release, for the first time, some latent romantic spirit that had dwelt in the room. In the midst of this glamor of historic atmosphere, the four figures, gathered so closely together against the clear space of the window, with its network of poplar leaves beyond the panes, borrowed for the moment a strange effectiveness of pose, a singular intensity of outline. Not only the figures, but the very objects by which they were surrounded appeared to vibrate in response to a tragic impulse.

Richard Ordway was standing upon the hearth-rug, his fine head and profile limned sharply against the pale brown wall at his side. His right hand was on Lydia's shoulder, who sat motionless, as if she had fallen there, with her gentle, flower-like head lying upon the arm of her son. Before them, as before her judges, Alice was drawn to her full height, her girlish body held tense and quivering, her splendid hair loosened about her forehead, her trembling mouth making a violent contrast to the intense pallor of her face.

Right or wrong Ordway saw only that she was standing alone, and as he crossed the threshold, he turned toward her and held out his hand.

"Alice," he said softly, as if the others were not present. Without raising her eyes, she shrank from him in the direction of Richard Ordway, as if shielding herself behind the iron fortitude of the man whom she so bitterly disliked

"Alice has been out driving alone with Geoffrey Heath all the afternoon," said Lydia in her clear, calm voice. "We had forbidden it, but she says that you knew of it and did not object to her going."

With the knowledge of the lie, Ordway grew red with humiliation, while his gaze remained fastened on the figure in the carpet at Alice's feet. He could not look at her, for he felt that her shame was scorching him like a hot wind. To look at her at the moment meant to convict her, and this his heart told him he could never do. He was conscious of the loud ticking of the clock, of the regular tapping

of Richard's fingers upon the marble mantel-piece, of the fading light on the poplar leaves beyond the window, and presently of the rapid roll of a carriage that went by in the street. Each of these sounds produced in him a curious irritation like a physical smart, and he felt again something of the dumb resentment with which he had entered his wife's dressing-room on the morning of his arrest. Then a smothered sob reached his ear, and Alice began to tremble from head to foot at his side. Lifting his eyes at last, he made a step forward and drew her into his arms.

"Was it so very wrong? I am sorry," he said to Lydia over the bowed head of their child. Until the words were uttered, and he felt Alice's tense body relax in his arms, he had not realised that in taking sides with her, he was not only making himself responsible for her fault, he was, in truth, actually sharing in the lie that she had spoken. The choice was an unconscious one, yet he knew even in the ensuing moment of his clearer judgment that it had been inevitable — that from the first instant, when he had paused speechless upon the threshold, there had been open to him no other course.

"I am sorry if it was wrong," he repeated, turning his glance now upon Richard Ordway.

"Do you know anything of Geoffrey Heath? Have you heard him spoken of by decent people since you have been in Botetourt?" asked the old man sternly.

"I have heard little of him," answered Daniel,

"and that little was far from good. We are sorry, Alice, are we not? It must not happen again if we can help it."

"It has happened before," said Lydia, lifting her head from Dick's arm, where it had lain. "It was then that I forbade her to see him alone."

"I did not know," responded Daniel, "but she will do as you wish hereafter. Will you not, Alice?"

"How does it concern them? What have they to do with me?" demanded Alice, turning in his arms to face her mother with a defiant and angry look, "they have never cared for me — they have always preferred Dick — always, even when I was a little child."

He saw Lydia grow white and hide her drooping face again on Dick's shoulder. "You are unjust to your mother, Alice," he said gravely, "she has loved you always, and I have loved you."

"Oh, you are different — I would die for you!" she exclaimed passionately, as she wept on his breast.

While he stood there holding her in his arms, it seemed to him that he could feel like an electric current the wave of feeling which had swept Alice and himself together. The inheritance which was his had descended to her also with its keen joys and its sharp anguish. Even the road which he had travelled so lately in weariness was the one upon which her brave young feet were now set. Not his alone, but his child's also, was this mixture of strength and weakness, of gaiety and sadness, of bitterness and compassion.

"If you will leave me alone with her, I think I can make her understand what you wish," he said, lifting his eyes from the dark head on his breast to Lydia, who had risen and was standing before him with her pensive, inquiring gaze fixed on his face. "She is like me," he added abruptly, "in so many ways."

"Yes, she is like you, I have always thought so," returned Lydia, quietly.

"And for that reason, perhaps, you have never quite understood her," he responded.

She bowed her head as if too polite or too indifferent to dissent from his words; and then slipping her hand through Richard Ordway's arm, she stood waiting patiently while the old man delivered his last bit of remonstrance.

"Try to curb her impulses, Daniel, or you will regret it."

He went out, still holding Lydia's hand, and a moment afterwards, when Daniel looked up at the sound of the hall door closing quickly, he saw that Dick also had vanished, and that he was alone in the library with Alice, who still sobbed on his breast.

A few moments before it had seemed to him that he needed only to be alone with her to make all perfectly clear between them. But when the others had passed out, and the door had closed at last on the empty silence in which they stood, he found that the words which he had meant to utter had vanished hopelessly from his mind. He had said to Lydia that Alice was like himself, but there had never

been an hour in his life when his hatred of a lie had not been as intense, as uncompromising, as it was to-day. And this lie which she had spoken appeared to divide them now like a drawn sword.

"Alice," he said, breaking with an effort through the embarrassment which had held him speechless, "will you give me your word of honour that you will never tell me a falsehood again?"

She stirred slightly in his arms, and he felt her body grow soft and yielding. "I did n't to you," she answered, "oh, I would n't to you."

"Not to the others then. Will you promise?"

Her warm young arm tightened about his neck. "I didn't mean to—I didn't mean to," she protested between her sobs, "but they forced me to do it. It was more than half their fault — they are so — so hateful! I tried to think of something else, but there was nothing to say, and I knew you would stand by me——"

"You have almost broken my heart," he answered, "for you have lied, Alice, you have lied."

She lifted her head and the next instant he felt her mouth on his cheek, "I wish I were dead! I have hurt you and I wish I were dead!" she cried.

"It is not hurting me that I mind — you may do that and welcome. It is hurting yourself, my child, my Alice," he answered; and pressing her upturned face back on his arm, he bent over her in an ecstasy of emotion, calling her his daughter, his darling, the one joy of his life. The iron in his nature had melted beneath her warm touch, and he felt again

the thrill, half agony, half rapture, with which he had received her into his arms on the day of her birth. That day was nearer to him now than was the minute in which he stood, and he could trace still the soft, babyish curves in the face which nestled so penitently on his arm. His very fear for her moved him into a deeper tenderness, and the appeal she made to him now was one with the appeal of her infancy, for its power lay in her weakness, not in her strength.

"Be truthful with me, Alice," he said, "and remember that nothing can separate me from you."

An hour later when he parted from her and went upstairs, he heard Lydia's voice calling to him through her half open door, and turning obediently, he entered her bedroom for the first time since the night of his return. Now as then the luxury, the softness, of his wife's surroundings produced in him a curious depression, an enervation of body; and he stood for an instant vainly striving to close his nostrils against the delicious perfume which floated from her lace-trimmed dressing-table.

Lydia, still in her light mourning gown, was standing, when he entered, before a little marquetry desk in one corner, her eyes on an open letter which she appeared to have left partially unread.

"I wanted to tell you, Daniel," she began at once, approaching the point with a directness which left him no time to wonder as to the purpose of her summons, "that Alice's intimacy with Geoffrey Heath has already been commented upon in Botetourt.

Cousin Paulina has actually written to me for an explanation."

"Cousin Paulina?" he repeated vaguely, and remembered immediately that the lady in question was his wife's one rich relation — an elderly female who was greatly respected for her fortune, which she spent entirely in gratifying her personal passion for trinkets. "Oh, yes," he added flippantly, "the old lady who used to look like a heathen idol got up for the sacrifice."

He felt that his levity was out of place, yet he went on rashly because he knew that he was doomed forever to appear at a disadvantage in Lydia's presence. She would never believe in him — his best motives would wear always to her the covering of hypocrisy; and the very hopelessness of ever convincing her goaded him at times into the reckless folly of despair.

"She writes me that people are talking of it," she resumed, sweetly, as if his untimely mirth had returned still-born into the vacancy from which it emerged.

"Who is this Geoffrey Heath you speak of so incessantly?" he demanded. "There was a Heath, I remember, who had a place near us in the country, and kept a barroom or a butcher's shop or something in town."

"That was the father," replied Lydia, with a shudder which deepened the slightly scornful curve of her lip. "He was a respectable old man, I believe, and made his fortune quite honestly, how-

ever it was. It was only after his son began to grow up that he became socially ambitious ——"

"And is that all you have against him?"

"Oh, there 's nothing against the old man — nothing at least except the glaring bad taste he showed in that monstrous house he built in Henry Street. He 's dead now, you know."

"Then the son has all the money and the house, too, has n't he?"

"All he has n't wasted, yes."

As she spoke she subsided into a chair, with a graceful, eddying motion of her black chiffon draperies, and continued the conversation with an expression of smiling weariness. All her attitudes were effective, and he was struck, while he stood, embarrassed and awkward, before her, by the plaintive grace that she introduced into her smallest gesture. Though he was aware that he saw her now too clearly for passion, the appeal of her delicate fairness went suddenly to his head.

"Then there 's not much to be said for the chap, I suppose?" he asked abruptly, fearing the prolonged strain of the silence.

"Very little for him, but a good deal about him, according to Cousin Paulina. It seems that three years ago he was sent away from the University for something disgraceful — cheating at cards, I believe; and since then he has been conspicuous chiefly because of his low associations. How Alice met him, I could never understand — I can't understand now."

'And do you think she cares for him—that she

even imagines that she does?" he demanded, while his terror rose in his throat and choked back his words.

"She will not confess it — how could she?" replied Lydia wearily, "I believe it is only wildness, recklessness, lack of discipline that prompts her. Yet he is good-looking — in a vulgar way," she added in disgust, "and Alice has always seemed to like vulgar things."

Her eyes rested on him, not directly, but as if they merely included him in their general pensive survey of the world; yet he read the accusation in her gentle avoidance of his gaze as plainly as she had uttered in it her clear, flute-like tones.

"It is very important," she went on, "that she should be curbed in her impulses, in her extravagance. Already her bills are larger than mine and yet she is never satisfied with the amount of her allowance. We can do nothing with her, Uncle Richard and I, but she seems to yield, in a measure, to your influence, and we thought — we hoped ——"

"I will — I will," he answered. "I will give my life to help her if need be. But Lydia," he broke out more earnestly, "you must stand by and aid me for her sake, for the sake of our child, we must work together ——"

Half rising in her chair, she looked at him fixedly a moment, while he saw her pupils dilate almost as if she were in physical fear.

"But what can I do? I have done all I could," she protested, with an injured look. By this look,

without so much as a gesture, she put the space of the whole room between them. The corners of her mouth quivered and drooped, and he watched the pathos creep back into her light blue eyes. "I have given up my whole life to the children since — since ——"

She broke off in a frightened whisper, but the unfinished sentence was more expressive than a volley of reproaches would have been. There was something in her thoughts too horrible to put into words, and this something of which she could not bring herself to speak, would have had no place in her existence except for him. He felt cowed suddenly, as if he had been physically beaten and thrust aside.

"You have been very brave — I know — I appreciate it all," he said, and while he spoke he drew away from her until he stood with his back against one of the amber satin curtains. Instinctively he put out his hand for support, and as it closed over the heavy draperies, he felt that the hard silken texture made his flesh creep. The physical sensation, brief as it was, recalled in some strange way the effect upon him of Lydia's smooth and shining surface when he had knelt before her on the night of his homecoming. Yet it was with difficulty even now that he could free himself from the conviction that her emotional apathy was but one aspect of innocence. Would he admit to-day that what he had once worshipped as purity of soul was but the frost of an unnatural coldness of nature? All at once, as he looked at her, he found himself reminded by her calm

forehead, her classic features, of the sculptured front of a marble tomb which he had seen in some foreign gallery. Was there death, after all, not life hidden for him in her plaintive beauty? The next instant, as he watched her, he told himself that such questions belonged to the evil promptings of his own nature.

"I realise all that you have been, all that you have suffered," he said at last, aware that his words sounded hysterical in the icy constraint which surrounded them.

When his speech was out, his embarrassment became so great that he found himself presently measuring the distance which divided him from the closed door. With a last effort of will, he went toward her and stretched out his hand in a gesture that was almost one of entreaty.

"Lydia," he asked, "is it too painful for you to have me here? Would it be any better for you if I went away?"

As he moved toward her she bent over with a nervous, mechanical movement to arrange her train, and before replying to his question, she laid each separate fold in place. "Why, by no means," she answered, looking up with her conventional smile. "It would only mean — would n't it? — that people would begin to wonder all over again?"

## CHAPTER VI

### The Iron Bars

As the days went on it seemed to him that his nature, repressed in so many other directions, was concentrated at last in a single channel of feeling. The one outlet was his passion for Alice, and nothing that concerned her was too remote or too trival to engross him—her clothes, her friendships, the particular chocolate creams for which she had once expressed a preference. To fill her life with amusements that would withdraw her erring impulses from Geoffrey Heath became for a time his absorbing purpose.

At first he told himself in a kind of rapture that success was apparent in his earliest and slightest efforts. For weeks Alice appeared to find interest and animation in his presence. She flattered, scolded, caressed and tyrannised, but with each day, each hour, she grew nearer his heart and became more firmly interwoven into his life.

Then suddenly a change came over her, and one day when she had been kissing him with "butterfly kisses" on his forehead, he felt her suddenly grow restless and draw back impatiently as if seeking a fresh diversion. A bored look had come into her eyes and he saw the three little wrinkles gather between her eyebrows.

"Alice," he said, alarmed by the swift alteration, "are you tired of the house? Shall we ride together?"

She shook her head, half pettishly, half playfully, "I can't — I 've an engagement," she responded.

"An engagement?" he repeated inquiringly. "Why, I thought we were always to ride when it was fair."

"I promised one of the girls to go to tea with her," she repeated, after a minute. "It is n't a real tea, but she wanted to talk to me, so I said I would go."

"Well, I 'm glad you did — don't give up the girls," he answered, relieved at once by the explanation.

In the evening when she returned, shortly after dark, "one of the girls" as she called laughingly from the library, had come home for the night with her. Ordway heard them chatting gayly together, but, when he went in for a moment before going upstairs to dress, they lapsed immediately into an embarrassed silence. Alice's visitor was a pretty, gray-eyed, flaxen-haired young woman named Jenny Lane, who smiled in a frightened way and answered "Yes — no," when he spoke to her, as if she offered him the choice of his favourite monosyllable from her lips. Clearly the subject which animated them was one in which, even as Alice's father, he could have no share.

For weeks after this it seemed to him that a silence fell gradually between them — that silence of the heart which is so much more oppressive than the mere outward silence of the lips. It was not, he told himself again and again, that there had come a perceptible

change in her manner. She still met him at breakfast with her flower and her caress, still flung herself into his arms at unexpected moments, still coaxed and upbraided in her passionate, childish voice. Nevertheless, the difference was there, and he recognised it with a pang even while he demanded of himself in what breathless suspension of feeling it could consist? Her caresses were as frequent, but the fervour, the responsiveness, had gone out of them; and he was brought at last face to face with the knowledge that her first vivid delight in him had departed forever. The thing which absorbed her now was a thing in which he had no share, no recognition; and true to her temperament, her whole impulsive being had directed itself into this new channel. "She is young and it is only natural that she should wish to have her school friends about her," he thought with a smile.

In the beginning it had been an easy matter to efface his personality and stand out of the way of Alice's life, but as the weeks drew on into months and the months into a year, he found that he had been left aside not only by his daughter, but by the rest of the household as well. In his home he felt himself to exist presently in an ignored, yet obvious way like a familiar piece of household furniture, which is neither commented upon nor wilfully overlooked. It would have occasioned, he supposed, some vague exclamations of surprise had he failed to appear in his proper place at the breakfast table, but as long as his accustomed seat was occupied all further use for his existence seemed at an end. He

was not necessary, he was not even enjoyed, but he was tolerated.

Before this passive indifference, which was worse to him than direct hostility, he found that his sympathies, his impulses, and even his personality, were invaded by an apathy that paralysed the very sources of his will. He beheld himself as the cause of the gloom, the suspicion, the sadness, that surrounded him, and as the cause, too, of Alice's wildness and of the pathetic loneliness in which Lydia lived. But for him, he told himself, there would have been no shadow upon the household; and his wife's pensive smile was like a knife in his heart whenever he looked up from his place at the table and met it unawares. At Tappahannock he had sometimes believed that his past was a skeleton which he had left behind; here he had grown, as the years went by, to think of it as a coffin which had shut over him and from which there was no escape. And with the realisation of this, a blighting remorse, a painful humbleness awoke in his soul, and was revealed outwardly in his face, in his walk, in his embarrassed movements. As he passed up and down the staircase, he went softly lest the heavy sound of his footsteps should become an annoyance to Lydia's sensitive ears. His manner lost its boyish freedom and grew awkward and nervous, and when he gave an order to the servants it seemed to him that a dreadful timidity sounded in his voice. He began to grow old suddenly in a year, before middle age had as yet had time to soften the way.

Looking in the glass one morning, when he had been less than three years in Botetourt, he discovered that the dark locks upon his forehead had turned almost white, and that his shoulders were losing gradually their youthful erectness of carriage. And it seemed to him that the courage with which he might have once broken away and begun anew had departed from him in this new and paralysing humility, which was like the humility of a helpless and burdensome old age.

After a day of peculiar loneliness, he was returning from Richard's office on this same afternoon, when a voice called to him from beneath the fringed linen cover of a little phaeton which had driven up to the crossing. Turning in surprise he found Aunt Lucy holding the reins over a fat pony, while she sat very erect, with her trim, soldierly figure emerging from a mountain of brown-paper parcels.

"This is the very chance I've been looking for, Daniel Ordway!" she exclaimed, in her emphatic voice. "Do you know, sir, that you have not entered my house once in the last three years?"

"Yes," he replied, "I know — but the fact is that I have hardly been anywhere since I came back."

"And why is that?" she demanded sharply.

He shook his head, "I don't know. Perhaps you can tell me."

"Yes, I can tell you," she snapped back, with a rudeness which, in some singular way, seemed to him kinder than the studied politeness that he had met. "It's because, in spite of all you've gone

through, you are still more than half a fool, Daniel Ordway."

"Oh, you 're right, I dare say," he acknowledged bitterly.

With a frown, which struck him curiously as the wrong side of a smile, she nodded her head while she made room for him among the brown-paper parcels on the low linen covered seat of the phaeton. "Come in here, I want to talk to you," she said, "there 's a little matter about which I should like your help."

"My help?" he repeated in astonishment, as a sensation of pleasure shot through his heart. It was so seldom that anybody asked his help in Botetourt. "Is the second green parrot dead, and do you want me to dig the grave?" he inquired, checking his unseemly derision as he met her warning glance.

"Polly is perfectly well," she returned, rapping him smartly upon the knee with her little tightly closed black fan which she carried as if it were a baton, "but I do not like Richard Ordway."

The suddenness of her announcement, following so inappropriately her comment upon the health of the green parrot, caused him to start from his seat in the amazement with which he faced her. Then he broke into an echo of his old boyish merriment, "You don't?" he retorted flippantly. "Well, Lydia does."

Her eyes blinked rapidly in the midst of her wrinkled little face, and bending over she flicked

the back of the fat pony gently with the end of the whip. "Oh, I 'm not sure I like Lydia," she responded, "though, of course, Lydia is a saint."

"Yes, Lydia is a saint," he affirmed.

"Well, I 'm not talking about Lydia," she resumed presently, "though there 's something I 've always had a burning curiosity to find out." For an instant she held back, and then made her charge with a kind of desperate courage. "Is she really a saint?" she questioned "or is it only the way that she wears her hair?"

Her question was so like the spoken sound of his own dreadful suspicion that it took away his breath completely, while he stared at her with a gasp that was evenly divided between a laugh and a groan.

"Oh, she 's a saint, there 's no doubt of that," he insisted loyally.

"Then I 'll let her rest," she replied, "and I 'm glad, heaven knows, to have my doubts at an end. But where do you imagine that I am taking you?"

"For a drive, I hope," he answered, smiling.

"It 's not," she rejoined grimly, "it 's for a visit."

"A visit?" he repeated, starting up with the impulse to jump over the moving wheel, "but I never visit."

She reached out her wiry little fingers, which clung like a bird's claw, and drew him by force back upon the seat.

"I am taking you to see Adam Crowley," she explained, "do you remember him?"

"Crowley?" he repeated the name as he searched

his memory. "Why, yes, he was my father's clerk for forty years, wasn't he? I asked when I came home what had become of him. So he is still living?"

"He was paralysed in one arm some years ago, and it seems he has lost all his savings in some investment your father had advised him to make. Of course, there was no legal question of a debt to him, but until the day your father died he had always made ample provision for the old man's support. Crowley had always believed that the allowance would be continued — that there would be a mention made of him in the will."

"And there was none?"

"It was an oversight, Crowley is still convinced, for he says he had a distinct promise."

"Then surely my uncle will fulfil the trust? He is an honourable man."

She shook her head. "I don't know that he is so much 'honourable' as he is 'lawful.' The written obligation is the one which binds him like steel, but I don't think he cares whether a thing is right or wrong, just or unjust, as long as it is the law. The letter holds him, but I doubt if he has ever even felt the motion of the spirit. If he ever felt it," she concluded with grim humour, "he would probably try to drive it out with quinine."

"Are we going there now — to see Crowley, I mean?"

"If you don't mind. Of course there may be nothing that you can do — but I thought that you might, perhaps, speak to Richard about it."

He shook his head, "No, I can't speak to my uncle, though I think you are unjust to him," he answered, after a pause in which the full joy of her appeal had swept through his heart, "but I have an income of my own, you know, and out of this, I can help Crowley."

For an instant she did not reply, and he felt her thin, upright little figure grow rigid at his side. Then turning with a start, she laid her hand, in its black lace mitten, upon his knee.

"O my boy, you are your mother all over again!" she said.

After this they drove on in silence down one of the shaded streets, where rows of neat little houses, packed together like pasteboard boxes, were divided from the unpaved sidewalks by low whitewashed fences. At one of these doors the phaeton presently drew up, and dropping the reins on the pony's back, Aunt Lucy alighted with a bound between the wheels, and began with Ordway's help, to remove the paper parcels from the seat. When their arms were full, she pushed open the gate, and led him up the short walk to the door where an old man, wearing a knitted shawl, sat in an invalid's chair beyond the threshold. At the sound of their footsteps Crowley turned on them a cheerful wrinkled face which was brightened by a pair of twinkling black eyes that gave him an innocent and merry look.

"I knew you'd come around," he said, smiling with his toothless mouth like an amiable infant.

"Matildy has been complaining that the coffee gave out at breakfast, but I said 't was only a sign that you were coming. Everything bad is the sign of something good, that 's what I say."

"I 've brought something better than coffee to-day, Adam," replied Aunt Lucy, seating herself upon the doorstep. "This is Daniel Ordway — do you remember him?"

The old man bent forward, without moving his withered hand, which lay outstretched on the cushioned arm of the chair, and it seemed to Ordway that the smiling black eyes pierced to his heart. "Oh, I remember him, I remember him," said Crowly, "poor boy — poor boy."

"He 's come back now," rejoined Aunt Lucy, raising her voice, "and he has come to see you."

"He 's like his mother," remarked Crowley, almost in a whisper, "and I 'm glad of that, though his father was a good man. But there are some good people who do more harm than bad ones," he added, "and I always knew that old Daniel Ordway would ruin his son." A chuckle broke from him, "but your mother: I can see her now running out bareheaded in the snow to scold me for not having on my overcoat. She was always seeing with other people's eyes, bless her, and feeling with other people's bodies."

Dropping upon the doorstep, Ordway replaced the knitted shawl which had slipped from the old man's shoulder. "I wonder how it is that you keep so happy in spite of everything?" he said.

"Happy?" repeated Crowley with a laugh. "Well,

I don't know, but I am not complaining. I 've seen men who had n't an ache in their bodies, who were worse off than I am to-day. I tell you it is n't the thing that comes to you, but the way you look at it that counts, and because you 've got a paralysed arm is no reason that you should have a paralysed heart as well. I 've had a powerful lot of suffering, but I 've had a powerful lot of happiness, too, and the suffering somehow, does n't seem to come inside of me to stay as the happiness does. You see, I 'm a great believer in the Lord, sir," he added simply, "and what I can't understand, I don't bother about, but just take on trust." All the cheerful wrinkles of his face shone peacefully as he talked. "It 's true there 've been times when things have gone so hard I 've felt that I 'd just let go and drop down to the bottom, but the wonderful part is that when you get to the bottom there 's still something down below you. It 's when you fall lowest that you feel most the Lord holding you up. It may be that there ain't any bottom after all but I know if there is one the Lord is surely waiting down there to catch you when you let go. He ain't only there, I reckon, but He 's in all the particular hard places on earth much oftener than He 's up in His heaven. He knows the poorhouse, you may be sure, and He 'll be there to receive me and tell me it ain't so bad as it looks. I don't want to get there, but if I do it will come a bit easier to think that the Lord has been there before me——"

The look in his smiling, toothless face brought to

Ordway, as he watched him, the memory of the epileptic little preacher who had preached in the prison chapel. Here, also, was that untranslatable rapture of the mystic, which cannot be put into words though it passes silently in its terrible joy from the heart of the speaker to the other heart that is waiting. Again he felt his whole being dissolve in the emotion which had overflowed his eyes that Sunday when he was a prisoner. He remembered the ecstasy with which he had said to himself on that day: "I have found the key!" and he knew now that this ecstasy was akin to the light that had shone for him while he sat on the stage of the town hall in Tappahannock. A chance word from the lips of a doting old man, who saw the doors of the poorhouse swing open to receive him, had restored to Ordway, with a miraculous clearness, the vision that he had lost; and he felt suddenly that the hope with which he had come out of the prison had never really suffered disappointment or failure.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Vision and the Fact

As he walked home along one of the side streets, shaded by an irregular row of flowering linden trees, it appeared to him that his life in Botetourt, so unendurable an hour before, had been rendered suddenly easy by a miracle, not in his surroundings, but in himself. His help had been asked, and in the act of giving there had flowed back into his heart the strength by which he might live his daily life. His unrest, his loneliness, his ineffectiveness, showed to him now as the result of some fatal weakness in his own nature — some failure in his personal attitude to the people among whom he lived.

Straight ahead of him a fine white dust drifted down from the blossoming lindens, lying like powder on the roughly paved street, where the wind blew it in soft swirls and eddies against the crumbling stone steps which led down from the straight doorways of the old-fashioned houses. The boughs overhead made a green arch through which the light fell, and it was under this thick tent of leaves, that, looking up presently, he saw Emily Brooke coming toward him. Not until she was so close to him that he could hear the rustle of her dress, did she lift her eyes from the pavement and meet his cry of welcome with a look of joyful surprise.

"Emily!" he cried, and at his voice, she stretched out her hand and stood smiling at him with the soft and animated gaze which, it seemed to him now, he had but dimly remembered. The thought of her had dwelt as a vision in his memory, yet he knew, as he looked into her face, that the ideal figure had lacked the charm, the radiance, the sparkling energy, of the living substance.

"So you came to Botetourt and did not send me word," he said.

"No, I did not send you word," she answered, "and now I am leaving within an hour."

"And you would have gone without seeing me?"

For an instant she hesitated, and he watched the joy in her face melt into a sorrowful tenderness. "I knew that you were well and I was satisfied. Would it have been kind to appear to you like an arisen ghost of Tappahannock?"

"The greatest kindness," he answered gravely, "that you — or anyone could do me."

She shook her head: "Kindness or not, I found that I could not do it."

"And you go in an hour?"

"My train leaves at seven o'clock. Is it nearly that?"

He drew out his watch, a mechanical action which relieved the emotional tension that stretched like a drawn cord between them. "It is not yet six. Will you walk a little way with me down this street? There is still time."

As she nodded silently, they turned and went

back along the side street, under the irregular rows of lindens, in the direction from which he had come.

"One of the girls I used to teach sent for me when she was dying," she said presently, as if feeling the need of some explanation of her presence in Botetourt. "That was three days ago and the funeral was yesterday. It is a great loss to me, for I have n't so many friends that I can spare the few I love."

He made no answer to her remark, and in the silence that followed, he felt, with a strange ache at his heart, that the distance that separated them was greater than it had been when she was in Tappahannock and he in Botetourt. Then there had stretched only the luminous dream spaces between their souls; now they stood divided by miles and miles of an immovable reality. Was it possible that in making her a part of his intense inner life, he had lost, in a measure, his consciousness of her actual existence? Then while the vision still struggled blindly against the fact, she turned toward him with a smile which lifted her once more into the shining zone of spirits.

"If I can feel that you are happy, that you are at peace, I shall ask nothing more of God," she said.

"I am happy to-day," he answered, "but if you had come yesterday, I should have broken down in my weakness. Oh, I have been homesick for Tappahannock since I came away!"

"Yet Botetourt is far prettier to my eyes."

"To mine also — but it is n't beauty, it is usefulness that I need. For the last two years I have told myself night and day that I had no place and no purpose — that I was the stone that the builders rejected."

"And it is different now?"

"Different? Yes, I feel as if I had been shoved suddenly into a place where I fitted — as if I were meant, after all, to help hold things together. And the change came — how do you think?" he asked, smiling. "A man wanted money of me to keep him out of the poorhouse."

The old gaiety was in his voice, but as she looked at him a ray of faint sunshine fell on his face through a parting in the leaves overhead, and she saw for the first time how much older he had grown since that last evening in Tappahannock. The dark hair was all gray now, the lines of the nose were sharper, the cheek bones showed higher above the bluish hollows beneath. Yet the change which had so greatly aged him had deepened the peculiar sweetness in the curves of his mouth, and this sweetness, which was visible also in his rare smile, moved her heart to a tenderness which was but the keener agony of renouncement.

"I know how it is," she said slowly, "just as in Tappahannock you found your happiness in giving yourself to others, so you will find it here."

"If I can only be of use — perhaps."

"You can be — you will be. What you were with us, you will be again."

"Yet it was different. There I had your help, had n't I?"

"And you shall have it here," she responded, brightly, though he saw that her eyes were dim with tears.

"Will you make me a promise?" he asked, stopping suddenly before some discoloured stone steps "will you promise me that if ever you need a friend —a strong arm, a brain to think for you—you will send me word?"

She looked at him smiling, while her tears fell from her eyes. "I will make no promise that is not for your sake as well as for mine," she answered.

"But it is for my sake—it is for my happiness."

"Then I will promise," she rejoined gravely, "and I will keep it."

"I thank you," he responded, taking the hand that she held out.

At his words she had turned back, pausing a moment in her walk, as if she had caught from his voice or his look a sense of finality in their parting. "I have but a few minutes left," she said, "so I must walk rapidly back or I shall be late."

A sudden clatter of horses' hoofs on the cobblestones in the street caused them to start away from each other, and turning his head, Ordway saw Alice gallop furiously past him with Geoffrey Heath at her side.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Emily beneath her breath, for Alice as she rode by had looked back for an instant, her glowing face framed in blown masses of hair.

"Yes, she is beautiful," he replied, and added after a moment as they walked on, "she is my daughter."

Her face brightened witn pleasure. "Then you are happy — you must be happy," she said. "Why, she looked like Brunhilde."

For a moment he hesitated. "Yes," he answered at last, "she is very beautiful — and I am happy."

After this they did not speak again until they reached the iron gate before the house in which she was staying. On his side he was caught up into some ideal realm of feeling, in which he possessed her so utterly that the meeting could not bring her nearer to him nor the parting take her farther away. His longing, his unrest, and his failure, were a part of his earthly nature which he seemed to have left below him in that other life from which he had escaped. Without doubt he would descend to it again, as he had descended at moments back into the body of his sin; but in the immediate exaltation of his mood, his love had passed the bounds of personality and entered into a larger and freer world. When they parted, presently, after a casual good-bye, he could persuade himself, almost without effort, that she went on with him in the soft May twilight.

At his door he found Lydia just returning from a drive, and taking her wraps from her arm, he ascended the steps and entered the house at her side. She had changed her mourning dress for a gown of pale gray cloth, and he noticed at once that her beauty had lost in transparency and become more human.

"I thought you had gone riding with Alice," she said without looking at him, as she stooped to gather up the ends of a lace scarf which had slipped from her arm.

"No, I was not with her," he answered. "I wanted to go, but she would not let me."

"Are you sure, then, that she was not with Geoffrey Heath?"

"I am sure that she was with him, for they passed me not a half hour ago as I came up."

They had entered the library while he spoke, and crossing to the hearth, where a small fire burned, Lydia looked up at him with her anxious gaze. "I hoped at first that you would gain some influence over her," she said, in a distressed voice, "but it seems now that she is estranged even from you."

"Not estranged, but there is a difference and I am troubled by it. She is young, you see, and I am but a dull and sober companion for her."

She shook her head with the little hopeless gesture which was so characteristic of her. Only yesterday this absence of resolution, the discontented droop of her thin, red lips, had worked him into a feeling of irritation against her. But his vision of her to-day had passed through some softening lens; and he saw her shallowness, her vanity, her lack of passion, as spiritual infirmities which were not less to be pitied than an infirmity of the body.

"The end is not yet, though," he added cheerfully after a moment, "and she will come back to me in time when I am able really to help her."

"Meanwhile is she to be left utterly uncontrolled?"

"Not if we can do otherwise. Only we must go quietly and not frighten her too much."

Again she met his words with the resigned, hopeless movement of her pretty head in its pearl gray bonnet. "I have done all I can," she said, "and it has been worse than useless. Now you must try if your method is better than mine."

"I am trying," he answered smiling.

For an instant her gaze fluttered irresolutely over him, as if she were moved by a passing impulse to a deeper utterance. That this impulse concerned Alice he was vaguely aware, for when had his wife ever spoken to him upon a subject more directly personal? Apart from their children he knew there was no bond between them — no memories, no hopes, no ground even for the building of a common interest. Lydia adored her children, he still believed, but when there was nothing further to be said of Dick or of Alice, their conversation flagged upon the most trivial topics. Upon the few unfortunate occasions when he had attempted to surmount the barrier between them, she had appeared to dissolve, rather than to retreat, before his approach. Yet despite her soft, cloud-like exterior, he had discovered that the rigour of her repulsion had hardened to a vein of iron in her nature. What must her life be, he demanded in a sudden passion of pity, when the strongest emotion she had ever known was the aversion that she now felt to him? All the bitterness in his heart melted into compassion at the thought, and he resisted an

impulse to take her into his arms and say: "I know, I understand, and I am sorry." Yet he was perfectly aware that if he were to do this, she would only shrink farther away from him, and look up at him with fear and mystification, as if she suspected him of some hidden meaning, of some strategic movement against her impregnable reserve. Her whole relation to him had narrowed into the single instinct of self-defence. If he came unconsciously a step nearer, if he accidentally touched her hand as he passed, he had grown to expect the flaring of her uncontrollable repugnance in the heightened red in her cheeks. "I know that I am repulsive to her, that when she looks at me she still sees the convict," he thought, "and yet the knowledge of this only adds to the pity and tenderness I feel."

Lydia had moved through the doorway, but turning back in the hall, she spoke with a return of confidence, as if the fact of the threshold, which she had put between them, had restored to her, in a measure, the advantage that she had lost.

"Then I shall leave Alice in your hands. I can do nothing more," she said.

"Give me time and I will do all that you cannot," he answered.

When she had gone upstairs, he crossed the hall to the closed door of the library, and stopped short on hearing Alice's voice break out into song. The girl was still in her riding habit, and the gay French air on her lips was in accord with the spirited gesture with which she turned to him as he appeared. Her

beauty would have disarmed him even without the kiss with which she hastened to avert his reproach.

"Alice, can you kiss me when you know you have broken your promise?"

"I made no promise," she answered coldly, drawing away. "You told me not to go riding with Geoffrey, but it was you that said it, not I, and you said it only because mamma made you. Oh, I knew all the time that it was she!"

Her voice broke with anger and before he could restrain her, she ran from the room and up the staircase. An instant afterward he heard a door slam violently above his head. Was she really in love with Geoffrey Heath? he asked in alarm, or was the passion she had shown merely the outburst of an undisciplined child?

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Weakness in Strength

At breakfast Alice did not appear, and when he went upstairs to her room, she returned an answer in a sullen voice through her closed door. All day his heart was oppressed by the thought of her, but to his surprise, when he came home to luncheon, she met him on the steps with a smiling face. It was evident to him at the first glance that she meant to ignore both the cause and the occasion of last evening's outburst; and he found himself yielding to her determination before he realised all that his evasion of the subject must imply. But while she hung upon his neck, with her cheek pressed to his, it was impossible that he should speak any word that would revive her anger against him. Anything was better than the violence with which she had parted from him the evening before. He could never forget his night of anguish, when he had strained his ears unceasingly for some stir in her room, hoping that a poignant realisation of his love for her would bring her sobbing and penitent to his door before dawn.

Now when he saw her again for the first time, she had apparently forgotten the parting which had so tortured his heart.

"You 've been working too hard, papa, and you 're tired," she remarked, rubbing the furrows between his eyebrows in a vain endeavour to smooth them out. "Are you obliged to go back to that hateful office this afternoon?"

"I 've some work that will keep me there until dark, I fear," he replied. "It 's a pity because I 'd like a ride of all things."

"It is a pity, poor dear," protested Alice, but he noticed that there was no alteration in her sparkling gaiety. Was there, indeed, almost a hint of relief in her tone? and was this demonstrative embrace but a guarded confession of her gratitude for his absence? Something in her manner—a veiled excitement in her look, a subtle change in her voice—caused him to hold her to him in a keener tenderness. It was on his lips to beg for her confidence, to remind her of his sympathy in whatever she might feel or think—to assure her even of his tolerance of Geoffrey Heath. But in the instant when he was about to speak, a sudden recollection of the look with which she had turned from him last evening, checked the impulse before it had had time to pass into words. And so because of his terror of losing her, he let her go at last in silence from his arms.

His office work that afternoon was heavier than usual, for in the midst of his mechanical copying and filing, he was abstracted by the memory of that strange, unnatural vivacity in Alice's face. Then in the effort to banish the disturbing recollection,

he recalled old Adam Crowley, wrapped in his knitted shawl, on the doorstep of his cottage. A check of Richard's contributing six hundred dollars toward the purchase of a new organ for the church he attended gave Daniel his first opportunity to mention the old man to his uncle.

"I saw Crowley the other day," he began abruptly, "the man who was my father's clerk for forty years, and whose place," he added smiling, "I seem to have filled."

"Ah, indeed," remarked Richard quietly. "So he is still living?"

"His right arm has been paralysed, as you know, and he is very poor. All his savings were lost in some investments he made by my father's advice."

"So I have heard—it was most unfortunate."

"He had always been led to believe, I understand, that he would be provided for by my father's will."

Richard laid down his pen and leaned thoughtfully back in his chair. "He has told me so," he rejoined, "but we have only his word for it, as there was no memorandum concerning him among my brother's papers."

"But surely it was well known that father had given him a pension. Aunt Lucy was perfectly aware of it—they talked of it together."

"During his lifetime he did pay Crowley a small monthly allowance in consideration of his past services. But his will was an extremely careful document—his bequests are all made in a perfectly legal form."

"Was not this will made some years ago, however, before the old man became helpless and lost his money?"

Richard nodded: "I understood as much from Crowley when he came to me with his complaint. But, as I reminded him, it would have been a perfectly simple matter for Daniel to have made such a bequest in a codicil — as he did in your case," he concluded deliberately.

The younger man met his gaze without flinching. "The will, I believe, was written while I was in prison," he observed.

"Upon the day following your conviction. By a former will, which he then destroyed, he had bequeathed to you his entire estate. You understand, of course," he pursued, after a pause in which he had given his nephew full time to possess himself of the information, as well as of the multiplied suggestions that he had offered, "that the income you receive now comes from money that is legally your own. If it should ever appear advisable for me to do so, I am empowered to make over to you the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in securities. The principal is left in my hands merely because it is to your interest that I should keep an eye on the investments."

"Yes, I understand, and I understand, too, that but for your insistence my father would probably have left me nothing."

"I felt very strongly that he had no right to disinherit you," returned Richard. "In my eyes

he made a grave mistake in refusing to lend you support at your trial ——"

"As you did, I acknowledge gratefully," interrupted Daniel, and wondered why the fact had aroused in him so little appreciation. As far as the observance of the conventional virtues were concerned, Richard Ordway, he supposed, was, and had been all his life, a good man, yet something in his austere excellence froze instantly all the gentler impulses in his nephew's heart. It was impossible after this to mention again the subject of Crowley, so going back to his work, he applied himself to his copying until Richard put down his papers and left the office. Then he locked his desk wearily and followed his uncle out into the street.

A soft May afternoon was just closing, and the street lamps glimmered, here and there, like white moths out of the mist which was fragrant with honeysuckle and roses. An old lamplighter, who was descending on his ladder from a tall lamppost at the corner, looked down at Ordway with a friendly and merry face.

"The days will soon be so long that you won't be needing us to light you home," he remarked, as he came down gingerly, his hands grasping the rungs of the ladder above his head. When he landed at Daniel's side he began to tell him in a pleasant, garrulous voice about his work, his rheumatism and the strange sights that he had seen in his rounds for so many years. "I 've seen wonders in my day, you may believe it," he went on, chuckling, "I 've seen

babies in carriages that grew up to be brides in orange blossoms, and then went by me later as corpses in hearses. I 've seen this town when it warn't mo'n a little middlin' village, and I 've seen soldiers dyin' in blood in this very street." A train went by with a rush along the gleaming track that ran through the town. "An' I 've known the time when a sight like that would have skeered folks to death," he added.

For a minute Ordway looked back, almost wistfully, after the flying train. Then with a friendly "good-bye!" he parted from the lamplighter and went on his way.

When he reached home he half expected to find Alice waiting for him in the twilight on the piazza, but, to his surprise, Lydia met him as he entered the hall and asked him, in a voice which sounded as if she were speaking in the presence of servants, to come with her into the library. There she closed the door upon him and inquired in a guarded tone:

"Has Alice been with you this afternoon? Have you seen or heard anything of her?"

"Not since luncheon. Why, I thought that she was at home with one of the girls."

"It seems she left the house immediately after you. She wore her dark blue travelling dress, and one of the servants saw her at the railway station at three o'clock."

For an instant the room swam before his eyes. "You believe, then, that she has gone off?" he asked in an unnatural voice, "that she has gone off with Geoffrey Heath?"

In the midst of his own hideous anguish he was impressed by the perfect decency of Lydia's grief — by the fact that she wore her anxiety as an added grace.

"I have telephoned for Uncle Richard," she said in a subdued tone, "and he has just sent me word that after making inquiries, he learned that Geoffrey Heath went to Washington on the afternoon train."

"And Alice is with him!"

"If she is not, where is she?" Her eyes filled with tears, and sinking into a chair she dropped her face in her clasped hands. "Oh, I wish Uncle Richard would come," she moaned through her fingers.

Again he felt a smothered resentment at this implicit reliance upon Richard Ordway. "We must make sure first that she is gone," he said, "and then it will be time enough to consider ways and means of bringing her back."

Turning abruptly away from her, he went out of the library and up the staircase to Alice's room, which was situated directly across the hall from his own. At the first glance it seemed to him that nothing was missing, but when he looked at her dressing-table in the alcove, he found that it had been stripped of her silver toilet articles, and that her little red leather bag, which he had filled with banknotes a few days ago, was not in the top drawer where she kept it. Something in the girl's chamber, so familiar, so redolent of associations with her bright presence, tore at his heart with a fresh sense of

loss, like a gnawing pain that fastens into a new wound. On the bed he saw her pink flannel dressing-gown, with the embroidered collar which had so delighted her when she had bought it on the floor at one side lay her pink quilted slippers, slightly soiled from use; and between the larger pillows was the delicate, lace-trimmed baby's pillow upon which she slept. The perfume of her youth, her freshness, was still in the room, as if she had gone from it for a little while through a still open door.

At a touch on his arm he looked round startled, to find one of the servants—the single remaining slave of the past generation—rocking her aged body as she stood at his side.

"She ain' gwine come back no mo'—Yes, Lawd, she ain' gwine come back no mo. Whut 's done hit 's done en hit cyarn be undone agin."

"Why, Aunt Mehaley, what do you mean?" he demanded sternly, oppressed, in spite of himself by her wailing voice and her African superstition.

"I'se seen er tur'ble heap done in my day wid dese hyer eyes," resumed the old negress, "but I ain' never seen none un um undone agin atter deys wunst been done. You kin cut down er tree, but you cyarn' mek hit grow back togedder. You kin wring de neck er a rooster, but you cyarn' mek him crow. Yes, my Lawd, hit 's easy to pull down, but hit 's hard to riz up. I 'se olé, Marster, en I'se mos' bline wid lookin', but I ain' never seen whut 's done undone agin."

She tottered out, still wailing in her half-crazed

voice, and hastily shutting the drawers of the dressing-table, he went downstairs again to where Lydia awaited him in the library.

"There 's no doubt, I fear, that she 's gone with Heath," he said, with a constraint into which he had schooled himself on the staircase. "As he appears to have stopped at Washington, I shall take the next train there, which leaves at nine-twenty-five. If they are married ——"

He broke off, struck by the pallor that overspread her face.

"But they are married! They must be married!" she cried in terror.

For an instant he stared back at her white face in a horror as great as hers. Was it the first time in his life, he questioned afterwards, that he had been brought face to face with the hideous skeletons upon which living conventions assume a semblance of truth?

"I hope to heaven that he has *not* married her!" he exclaimed in a passion from which she shrank back trembling. "Good God! do you want me to haggle with a cad like that to make him marry my child?"

"And if he does n't? what then?" moaned Lydia, in a voice that seemed to fade away while she spoke.

"If he does n't I shall be almost tempted to bless his name. Have n't you proved to me that he is a cheat and a brute and a libertine, and yet you dare to tell me that I must force him to marry Alice. Oh, if he will only have the mercy to leave her free, I may still save her!" he said.

She looked at him with dilated eyes as if rooted in fear to the spot upon which she stood. "But the consequences," she urged weakly at last in a burst of tears.

"Oh, I 'll take the consequences," he retorted harshly, as he went out.

An hour later, when he was settled in the rushing train, it seemed to him that he was able to find comfort in the words with which he had separated from his wife. Let Alice do what she would, there was always hope for her in the thought that he might help her to bear, even if he could not remove from her, the consequences of her actions. Could so great a force as his love for her fail to avert from her young head at least a portion of her inevitable disillusionment? The recollection of her beauty, of her generosity, and of the wreck of her womanhood almost before it had begun, not only added to his suffering, but seemed in some inexplicable way to increase his love. The affection he had always felt for her was strengthened now by that touch of pity which lends a deeper tenderness to all human relations.

Upon reaching Washington he found that a shower had come up, and the pavements were already wet when he left the station. He had brought no umbrella, but he hardly heeded this in the eagerness which drove him from street to street in his search for his child. After making vain inquiries at several of the larger hotels, he had begun to feel almost hopeless, when going into the newest and most fashionable of them all, he discovered that "Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey

Heath" had been assigned an apartment there an hour before. In answer to his question the clerk informed him that the lady had ordered her dinner served upstairs, leaving at the same time explicit instructions that she was "not at home" to anyone who should call. But in spite of this rebuff, he drew out his card, and sat down in a chair in the brilliantly lighted lobby. He had selected a seat near a radiator in the hope of drying his damp clothes, and presently a little cloud of steam rose from his shoulders and drifted out into the shining space. As he watched the gorgeous, over-dressed women who swept by him, he remembered as one remembers a distant dream, the years when his life had been spent among such crowds in just such a dazzling glare of electric light. It appeared false and artificial to him now, but in the meantime, he reflected, while he looked on, he had been in prison.

A voice at his elbow interrupted his thoughts, and turning in response to an invitation from a buttoned sleeve, he entered an elevator and was borne rapidly aloft among a tightly wedged group of women who were loudly bewailing their absence from the theatre. It was with difficulty that he released himself at the given signal from his escort, and stepped out upon the red velvet carpet which led to Alice's rooms. In response to a knock from the boy who had accompanied him, the door flew open with a jerk, and Alice appeared before him in a bewildering effect of lace and pink satin.

"O papa, papa, you naughty darling!" she exclaimed, and was in his arms before he had time to utter the reproach on his lips.

With her head on his breast, he was conscious at first only of an irresponsible joy, like the joy of the angels for whom evil no longer exists. To know that she was alive, that she was safe, that she was in his arms, seemed sufficient delight, not only unto the day, but unto his whole future as well. Then the thought of what it meant to find her thus in her lace and satin came over him, and drawing slightly away he looked for the first time into her face.

"Alice, what does it mean?" he asked, as he kissed her.

Pushing the loosened hair back from her forehead, she met his question with a protesting pout.

"It means that you 're a wicked boy to run away from home like this and be all by yourself in a bad city," she responded with a playful shake of her finger. Then she caught his hand and drew him down on the sofa beside her in the midst of the filmy train of her tea-gown. "If you promise never to do it again, I shan't tell mamma on you," she added, with a burst of light-hearted merriment.

"Where were you married, Alice? and who did it?" he asked sternly.

At his tone a ripple of laughter broke from her lips, and reaching for her little red leather bag on the table, she opened it and tossed a folded paper upon his knees. "I did n't ask his name," she responded, "but you can find it all written on that, I suppose."

"And you cared nothing for me? — nothing for my anxiety, my distress?"

"I always meant to telegraph you, of course. Geoffrey has gone down now to do it."

"But were you obliged to leave home in this way? If you had told me you loved him, I should have understood—should have sympathised."

"Oh, but mamma would n't, and I had to run off. Of course, I wanted a big wedding like other girls, and a lot of bridesmaids and a long veil, but I knew you 'd never consent to it, so I made up my mind just to slip away without saying a word. Geoffrey is so rich that I can make up afterwards for the things I missed when I was married. This is what he gave me to-day. Is n't it lovely?"

Baring her throat she showed him a pearl necklace hidden beneath her lace collar. "We 're sailing day after to-morrow," she went on, delightedly, "and we shall go straight to Paris because I am dying to see the shops. I would n't run away with him until he promised to take me there."

There was no regret in her mind, no misgiving, no disquietude. The thought of his pain had not marred for an instant the pleasure of her imaginary shopping. "O papa, I am happy, so happy!" she sang aloud, springing suddenly to her full height and standing before him in her almost barbaric beauty— from the splendid hair falling upon her shoulders to the little feet that could not keep still for sheer joy of living. He saw her red mouth glow and tremble as she bent toward him. "To think that

I 'm really and truly out of Botetourt at last!" she cried.

"Then you 've no need of me and I may as well go home?" he said a little wistfully as he rose.

At this she hung upon his neck for a minute with her first show of feeling. "I 'd rather you wouldn 't stay till Geoffrey comes back," she answered, abruptly releasing him, "because it would be a surprise to him and he 's always so cross when he 's surprised. He has a perfectly awful temper," she confided in a burst of frankness, "but I 've learned exactly how to manage him, so it doesn 't matter. Then he 's so handsome, too. I should n't have looked at him twice if he had n't been handsome. Now, go straight home and take good care of yourself and don't get fat and bald before I come back."

She kissed him several times, laughing in little gasps, while she held him close in her arms. Then putting him from her, she pushed him gently out into the hall. As the door closed on her figure, he felt that it shut upon all that was living or warm in his heart.

# BOOK FOURTH

# LIBERATION

## CHAPTER I

### The Inward Light

On the day that he returned to Botetourt, it seemed to Ordway that the last vestige of his youth dropped from him; and one afternoon six months later, as he passed some schoolboys who were playing ball in the street, he heard one of them remark in an audible whisper: "Just wait till that old fellow over there gets out of the way." Since coming home again his interests, as well as his power of usefulness, had been taken from him; and the time that he had spent in prison had aged him less than the three peaceful years which he had passed in Botetourt. All that suffering and experience could not destroy had withered and died in the monotonous daily round which carried him from his home to Richard's office and back again from Richard's office to his home.

Outwardly he had grown only more quiet and gentle, as people are apt to do who approach the middle years in a position of loneliness and dependence. To Richard and to Lydia, who had never entirely ceased to watch him, it appeared that he had at last "settled down," that he might be, perhaps, trusted to walk alone; and it was with a sensation of relief that his wife observed the intense youthful beam

fade from his blue eyes. When his glance grew dull and lifeless, and his features fell gradually into the lines of placid repose which mark the body's contentment rather than the spirit's triumph, it seemed to her that she might at last lay aside the sleepless anxiety which had been her marriage portion.

"He has become quite like other people now," she said one day to Richard, "do you know that he has grown to take everything exactly as a matter of course, and I really believe he enjoys what he eats."

"I 'm glad of that," returned Richard, "for I 've noticed that he is looking very far from well. I advised him several weeks ago to take care of that cough, but he seems to have some difficulty in getting rid of it."

"He has n't been well since Alice's marriage," observed Lydia, a little troubled. "You know he travelled home from Washington in wet clothes and had a spell of influenza afterward. He 's had a cold ever since, for I hear him coughing a good deal after he first goes to bed."

"You 'd better make him attend to it, I think, though with his fine chest there 's little danger of anything serious."

"Do you suppose Alice's marriage could have sobered him? He 's grown very quiet and grave, and I dare say it 's a sign that his wildness has gone out of him, poor fellow. You remember how his laugh used to frighten me? Well, he never laughs

like that now, though he sometimes stares hard at me as if he were looking directly through me, and did n't even know that he was doing it."

As she spoke she glanced out of the window and her eyes fell on Daniel, who came slowly up the gravelled walk, his head bent over an armful of old books he carried.

"He visits a great deal among the poor," remarked Richard, "and I think that 's good for him, provided, of course, that he does it with discretion."

"I suppose it is," said Lydia, though she added immediately, "but are n't the poor often very immoral?"

A reply was on Richard's lips, but before he could utter it, the door opened and Daniel entered with the slow, almost timid, step into which he had schooled himself since his return to Botetourt. As he saw Richard a smile—his old boyish smile of peculiar sweetness—came to his lips, but without speaking, he crossed to the table and laid down the books he carried.

"If those are old books, won't you remember to take them up to your room, Daniel?" said Lydia, in her tone of aggrieved sweetness. "They make such a litter in the library."

He started slightly, a nervous affection which had increased in the last months, and looked at her with an apologetic glance. As he stood there she had again that singular sensation of which she had spoken to Richard, as if he were gazing through her and not at her.

"I beg your pardon," he answered, "I remember now that I left some here yesterday."

"Oh, it does n't matter, of course," she responded pleasantly, "it 's only that I like to keep the house tidy, you know."

"They do make rather a mess," he admitted, and gathering them up again, he carried them out of the room and up the staircase.

They watched his bent gray head disappear between the damask curtains in the doorway, and then listened almost unconsciously for the sound of his slow gentle tread on the floor above.

"There was always too much of the dreamer about him, even as a child," commented Richard, when the door was heard to close over their heads, "but he seems contented enough now with his old books, does n't he?"

"Contented? Yes, I believe he is even happy. I never say much to him because, you see, there is so very little for us to talk about. It is a dreadful thing to confess," she concluded resolutely, "but the truth is I 've been always a little afraid of him since—since——"

"Afraid?" he looked at her in astonishment.

"Well, not exactly afraid—but nervous with a kind of panic shudder at times—a dread of his coming close to me, of his touching me, of his wanting things of me." A shiver ran through her and she bit her lip as if to hide the expression of horror upon her face. "There 's nobody else on earth that I would say it to, but when he first came back I used

to have nightmares about it. I could never get it out of my mind a minute and if they left me alone with him, I wanted almost to scream with nervousness. It 's silly I know, and I can 't explain it even to you, but there were times when I shrieked aloud in my sleep because I dreamed that he had come into my room and touched me. I felt that I was wrong and foolish, but I could n't help it, and I tried—tried—oh, so hard to bear things and to be brave and patient."

The tears fell from her eyes on her clasped hands, but her attitude of sorrow only made more appealing the Madonna-like loveliness of her features.

"You 've been a saint, Lydia," he answered, patting her drooping shoulder as he rose to his feet. "Poor girl, poor girl! and no daughter of my own could be dearer to me," he added in his austere sincerity of manner.

"I have tried to do right," replied Lydia, lifting her pure eyes to his in an overflow of religious emotion.

Meanwhile the harmless object of their anxiety sat alone in his room under a green lamp, with one of the musty books he had bought open upon his knees. He was not reading, for his gaze was fixed on the opposite wall, and there was in his eyes something of the abstracted vision which Lydia dreaded. It was as if his intellect, forced from the outward experience back into the inner world of thought, had ended by projecting an image of itself into the space at which he looked. While he sat there the

patient, apologetic smile with which he had answered to his wife was still on his lips.

"I suppose it 's because I 'm getting old that people and things no longer make me suffer," he said to himself, "it 's because I 'm getting old that I can look at Lydia unmoved, that I can feel tenderness for her even while I see the repulsion creep into her eyes. It is n't her fault, after all, that she loathes me, nor is it mine. Yes, I 'm certainly an old fellow, the boy was right. At any rate, it 's pleasanter, on the whole, than being young."

Closing the book, he laid it on the table, and leaned forward with his chin on his hands. "But if I 'd only known when I was young!" he added, "if I 'd only known!" His past life rose before him as a picture that he had seen, rather than as a road along which he had travelled; and he found himself regarding it almost as impersonally as he might have regarded the drawing upon the canvas. The peril of the inner life had already begun to beset him—that mysterious power of reliving one's experience with an intensity which makes the objective world appear dull and colourless by contrast. It was with an effort at times that he was able to detach his mind from the contemplative habit into which he had fallen. Between him and his surroundings there existed but a single bond, and this was the sympathy which went out of him when he was permitted to reach the poor and the afflicted. To them he could still speak, with them he could still be mirthful; but from his wife, his uncle, and

the members of his own class, he was divided by that impenetrable wall of social tradition. In his home he had ceased to laugh, as Lydia had said; but he could still laugh in the humbler houses of the poor. They had received him as one of themselves, and for this reason alone he could remember how to be merry when he was with them. To the others, to his own people, he felt himself to be always an outsider, a reclaimed castaway, a philanthropic case instead of an individual; and he knew that if there was one proof the more to Lydia that he was in the end a redeemed character, it was the single fact that he no longer laughed in her presence. It was, he could almost hear her say, unbecoming, if not positively improper, that a person who had spent five years in prison should be able to laugh immoderately afterward; and the gravity of his lips was in her eyes, he understood, the most satisfactory testimony to the regeneration of his heart.

And yet Lydia, according to her vision, was a kind, as well as a conscientious woman. The pity of it was that if he were to die now, three years after his homecoming, she would probably reconstruct an imaginary figure of him in her memory, and wear crape for it with appropriate grace and dignity. The works of the imagination are manifold, he thought with a grim humour, even in a dull woman.

But as there was not likely to occur anything so dramatic, in the immediate present, as his death, he wondered vaguely what particular form of aversion his wife's attitude would next express. Or

could it be that since he had effaced himself so utterly, he hardly dared to listen to the sound of his footsteps in the house, she had grown to regard him with a kind of quiet tolerance, as an object which was unnecessary, perhaps, yet entirely inoffensive? He remembered now that during those terrible first years in prison he had pursued the thought of her with a kind of hopeless violence, yet to-day he could look back upon her desertion of him in his need with a compassion which forgave the weakness that it could not comprehend. That, too, he supposed was a part of the increasing listlessness of middle age. In a little while he would look forward, it might be, to the coming years without dread—to the long dinners when he sat opposite to her with the festive bowl of flowers between them, to the quiet evenings when she lingered for a few minutes under the lamp before going to her room —those evenings which are the supreme hours of love or of despair. Oh, well, he would grow indifferent to the horror of these things, as he had already grown indifferent to the soft curves of her body. Yes, it was a thrice blessed thing, this old age to which he was coming!

Then another memory flooded his heart with the glow of youth, and he saw Emily, as she had appeared to him that night in the barn more than six years ago, when she had stood with the lantern held high above her head and the red cape slipping back from her upraised arm. A sharp pain shot through him, and he dropped his eyes as if he had met a blow.

That was youth at which he had looked for one longing instant—that was youth and happiness and inextinguishable desire.

For a moment he sat with bent head; then with an effort he put the memory from him, and opened his book at the page where he had left off. As he did so there was a tap at his door, and when he had spoken, Lydia came in timidly with a letter in her hand.

"This was put into Uncle Richard's box by mistake," she said, "and he has just sent it over."

He took it from her and seeing that it was addressed in Baxter's handwriting, laid it, still unopened, upon the table. "Won't you sit down?" he asked, pushing forward the chair from which he had risen.

A brief hesitation showed in her face; then as he turned away from her to pick up some scattered papers from the floor, she sat down with a tentative, nervous manner.

"Are you quite sure that you 're well, Daniel?" she inquired. "Uncle Richard noticed to-day that you coughed a good deal in the office. I wonder if you get exactly the proper kind of food?"

He nodded, smiling. "Oh, I 'm all right," he responded, "I 'm as hard as nails, you know, and always have been."

"Even hard people break down sometimes. I wish you would take a tonic or see a doctor."

Her solicitude surprised him, until he remembered that she had never failed in sympathy for

purely physical ailments. If he had needed bodily healing instead of mental, she would probably have applied it with a conscientious devotedness.

"I am much obliged to you, but I 'm really not sick," he insisted, "it is very good of you, however."

"It is nothing more than my duty," she rejoined, sweetly.

"Well, that may be, but there 's nothing to prevent my being obliged to you for doing your duty."

Puzzled as always by his whimsical tone, she sat looking at him with her gentle, uncomprehending glance. "I wish, all the same," she murmured, "that you would let me send you a mustard plaster to put on your chest."

He shook his head without replying in words to her suggestion.

"Do you know it is three months since we had a letter from Alice," he said, "and six since she went away."

"Oh, it 's that then? You have been worrying about Alice?"

"How can I help it? We hardly know even that she is living."

"I 've thought of her day and night since her marriage, though it 's just as likely, isn 't it, that she 's taken up with the new countries and her new clothes?"

"Oh, of course, it may be that, but it is the awful uncertainty that kills."

With a sigh she looked down at her slippered feet. "I was thinking to-day what a comfort Dick is to me

—to us all," she said, "one is so sure of him and he is doing so splendidly at college."

"Yes," he agreed, "Dick is a comfort. I wish poor Alice was more like him."

"She was always wild, you remember, never like other children, and it was impossible to make her understand that some things were right and some wrong. Yet I never thought that she would care for such a loud, vulgar creature as Geoffrey Heath."

"Did she care for him?" asked Daniel, almost in a whisper, "or was it only that she wanted to see Paris?"

"Well, she may have improved him a little—at least let us hope so," she remarked as if she had not heard his question. "He has money, at any rate, and that is what she has always wanted, though I fear even Geoffrey's income will be strained by her ceaseless extravagance."

As she finished he thought of her own youth, which she had evidently forgotten, and it seemed to him that the faults she blamed most in Alice were those which she had overcome patiently in her own nature.

"I could stand anything better than this long suspense," he said gently.

"It does wear one out," she rejoined. "I am very, very sorry for you."

Some unaccustomed tone in her voice—a more human quality, a deeper cadence, made him wonder in an impulse of self-reproach if, after all, the breach between them was in part of his own making?

Was it still possible to save from the ruin, if not love, at least human companionship?

"Lydia," he said, "it is n't Alice, it is mostly loneliness, I think."

Rising from her chair she stood before him with her vague, sweet smile playing about her lips.

"It is natural that you should feel depressed with that cough," she remarked, "I really wish you would let me send you a mustard plaster."

As the cough broke out again, he strangled it hilariously in a laugh. "Oh, well, if it 's any comfort to you, I don't mind," he responded.

When she had gone he picked up Baxter's letter from the table and opened it with trembling fingers. What he had expected to find, he hardly knew, but as he read the words, written so laboriously in Baxter's big scrawling writing, he felt that his energy returned to him with the demand for action—for personal responsibility.

"I don't know whether or not you heard of Mrs. Brooke's death three months ago," the letter ran, "but this is to say that Mr. Beverly dropped down with a paralytic stroke last week; and now since he 's dead and buried, the place is to be sold for debt and the children sent off to school to a friend of Miss Emily's where they can go cheap. Miss Emily has a good place now in the Tappahannock Bank, but she 's going North before Christmas to some big boarding school where they teach riding. There are a lot of things to be settled about the sale, and I thought that, being convenient, you might take the trouble to run down for a day and help us with your advice, *which is of the best always*.

"Hoping that you are in good health, I am at present,

BAXTER."

As he folded the letter a flush overspread his face. "I 'll go," he said, with a new energy in his voice, "I 'll go to-morrow."

Then turning in response to a knock, he opened the door and received the mustard plaster which Lydia had made.

## CHAPTER II

### At Tappahannock Again

He had sent a telegram to Banks, and as the train pulled into the station, he saw the familiar sandy head and freckled face awaiting him upon the platform.

"By George, this is a bully sight, Smith," was the first shout that reached his ears.

"You 're not a bit more pleased than I am," he returned laughing with pleasure, as he glanced from the station, crowded with noisy Negroes, up the dusty street into which they were about to turn. "It's like coming home again, and upon my word, I wish I were never to leave here. But how are you, Banks? So you are married to Milly and going to live contented forever afterward."

"Yes, I 'm married," replied Banks, without enthusiasm, "and there 's a baby about which Milly is clean crazy. Milly has got so fat," he added, "that you 'd never believe I could have spanned her waist with my hands three years ago."

"Indeed? And is she as captivating as ever?"

"Well, I reckon she must be," said Banks, "but it doesn 't seem so mysterious, somehow, as it used to." His silly, affectionate smile broke out as he looked at his companion. "To tell the truth,"

he confessed, "I 've been missing you mighty hard, Smith, marriage or no marriage. It ain't anything against Milly, God knows, that she can't take your place, and it ain't anything against the baby. What I want is somebody I can sit down and look up to, and I don't seem to be exactly able to look up to Milly or to the baby."

"The trouble with you, my dear Banks, is that you are an incorrigible idealist and always will be. You were born to be a poet and I don't see to save my life how you escaped."

"I did n't. I used to write a poem every Sunday of my life when I first went into tobacco. But after that Milly came and I got used to spending all my Sundays with her."

"Well, now that you have her in the week, you might begin all over again."

They were walking rapidly up the long hill, and as Ordway passed, he nodded right and left to the familiar faces that looked out from the shop doors. They were all friendly, they were all smiling, they were all ready to welcome him back among them.

"The queer part is," observed Banks, with that stubborn vein of philosophy which accorded so oddly with his frivolous features, "that the thing you get does n't ever seem to be the same as the thing you wanted. This Milly is kind to me and the other was n't, but, somehow, that has n't made me stop regretting the other one that I did n't marry—the Milly that banged and snapped at me about my clothes and things all day long. I don't know what

it means, Smith, I 've studied about it, but I can't understand."

"The meaning of it is, Banks, that you wanted not the woman, but the dream."

"Well, I did n't get it," rejoined Banks, gloomily.

"Yet Milly 's a good wife and you 're happy, are n't you?"

"I should be," replied Banks, "if I could forget how darn fascinating that other Milly was. Oh, yes, she 's a good wife and a doting mother, and I 'm happy enough, but it 's a soft, squashy kind of happiness, not like the way I used to feel when I 'd walk home with you after the preaching in the old field."

While he spoke they had reached Baxter's warehouse, and as Ordway was recognized, there was a quiver of excitement in the little crowd about the doorway. A moment later it had surrounded him with a shout of welcome. A dozen friendly hands were outstretched, a dozen breathless lips were calling his name. As the noise passed through the neighbouring windows, the throng was increased by a number of small storekeepers and a few straggling operatives from the cotton mills, until at last he stopped, half laughing, half crying, in their midst. Ten minutes afterward, when Baxter wedged his big person through the archway, he saw Ordway standing bareheaded in the street, his face suffused with a glow which seemed to give back to him a fleeting beam of the youth that he had lost.

"Well, I reckon it 's my turn now. You can

just step inside the office, Smith," remarked Baxter, while he grasped Ordway's arm and pulled him back into the warehouse. As they entered the little room, Daniel saw again the battered chair, the pile of Smith's Almanacs, and the paper weight, representing a gambolling kitten, upon the desk.

"I 'm glad to see you—we 're all glad to see you," said Baxter, shaking his hand for the third time with a grasp which made Ordway feel that he was in the clutch of a down cushion. "It is n't the way of Tappahannock to forget a friend, and she ain't forgotten you."

"It 's like her," returned Ordway, and he added with a sigh, "I only wish I were coming back for good, Baxter."

"There now!" exclaimed Baxter, chuckling, "you don't, do you? Well, all I can say, my boy, is that you 've got a powerful soft spot that you left here, and your old job in the warehouse is still waiting for you when you care to take it. I tell you what, Smith, you 've surely spoiled me for any other bookkeeper, and I ain't so certain, when it comes to that, that you have n't spoiled me for myself."

He was larger, softer, more slovenly than ever, but he was so undeniably the perfect and inimitable Baxter, that Ordway felt his heart go out to him in a rush of sentiment. "Oh, Baxter, how is it possible that I 've lived without you?" he asked.

"I don't know, Smith, but it 's a plain fact that after my wife—and that 's nature—there ain't anybody goin' that I set so much store by. Why, when

I was in Botetourt last spring, I went so far as to put my right foot on your bottom step, but, somehow, the left never picked up the courage to follow it."

"Do you dare to tell me that you 've been to Botetourt?" demanded Ordway with indignation.

"Well, I could have stood the house you live it, though it kind of took my breath away," replied Baxter, with an embarrassed and guilty air, "but when it came to facing that fellow at the door, then my courage gave out and I bolted. I studied him a long while, thinking I might get my eyes used to the sight of him, but it did no good. I declar', Smith, I could no more have put a word to him than I could to the undertaker at my own funeral. Bless my soul, suh, poor Mr. Beverly, when he was alive, did n't hold a tallow candle to that man."

"You might have laid in wait for me in the street, then, that would have been only fair."

"But how did I know, Smith, that you wan't livin' up to the man at your door?"

"It would n't have taken you long to find out that I was n't. So poor Mr. Beverly is dead and buried, then, is he?"

Baxter's face adopted instantly a funereal gloom, and his voice, when he spoke, held a quaver of regret.

"There was n't a finer gentleman on earth than Mr. Beverly," he said, "and he would have given me his last blessed cent if he 'd ever had one to give. I 've lost a friend, Smith, there 's no doubt of that, I 've lost a friend. And poor Mrs. Brooke, too,"

he added sadly. "Many and many is the time I 've heard Mr. Beverly grieven' over the way she worked. 'If things had only come out as I planned them, Baxter,' he 'd say to me, 'my wife should never have raised her finger except to lift food to her lips.'"

"And yet I 've seen him send her downstairs a dozen times a day to make him a lemonade," observed Ordway cynically.

"That was n't his fault, suh, he was born like that—it was just his way. He was always obliged to have what he wanted."

"Well, I can forgive him for killing his wife, but I can't pardon him for the way he treated his sister. That girl used to work like a farm hand when I was out there."

"She was mighty fond of him all the same, was Miss Emily."

"Everybody was, that 's what I 'm quarreling about. He did n't deserve it."

"But he meant well in his heart, Smith, and it 's by that that I 'm judgin' him. It was n't his fault, was it, if things never went just the way he had planned them out? I don't deny, of course, that he was sort of flighty at times, as when he made a will the week before he died and left five hundred dollars to the Tappahannock Orphan Asylum."

"To the Orphan Asylum? Why, his own children are orphans, and he did n't have five hundred dollars to his name!"

"Of course, he didn 't, that 's just the point,"

said Baxter with a placid tolerance which seemed largely the result of physical bulk, "and so they have had to sell most of the furniture to pay the bequest. You see, just the night before his stroke, he got himself considerably worked up over those orphans. So he just could n't help hopin' he would have five hundred dollars to leave 'em when he came to die, an' in case he did have it he thought he might as well be prepared. Then he sat right down and wrote the bequest out, and the next day there came his stroke and carried him off."

"Oh, you 're a first-rate advocate, Baxter, but that does n't alter my opinion of Mr. Beverly. What about his own orphans now? How are they going to be provided for?"

"It seems Miss Emily is to board 'em out at some school she knows of, and I 've settled it with her that she 's to borrow enough from me to tide over any extra expenses until spring."

"Then we are to wind up the affairs of Cedar Hill, are we? I suppose it 's best for everybody, but it makes me sad enough to think of it."

"And me, too, Smith," said Baxter, sentimentally. "I can see Mr. Beverly to the life now playin' with his dominoes on the front porch. But there 's mighty little to wind up, when it comes to that. It 's mortgaged pretty near to the last shingle, and when the bequest to the orphans is paid out of what 's over, there 'll be precious few dollars that Miss Emily can call her own. The reason I sent for you, Smith," he added in a solemn voice, "was that I thought you

might be some comfort to that poor girl out there in her affliction. If you feel inclined, I hoped you 'd walk out to Cedar Hill and read her a chapter or so in the Bible. I remembered how consolin' you used to be to people in trouble."

With a prodigious effort Ordway swallowed his irreverent mirth, while Baxter's pious tones sounded in his ears. "Of course I shall go out to Cedar Hill," he returned, "but I was wondering, Baxter," he broke off for a minute and then went on again with an embarrassed manner, "I was wondering if there was any way I could help those children without being found out? It would make me particularly happy to feel that I might share in giving them an education. Do you think you could smuggle the money for their school bills into their Christmas stockings?"

Baxter thought over it a moment. "I might manage it," he replied, "seein' that the bills are mostly to come through my hands, and I 'm to settle all that I can out of what 's left of the estate."

As he paused Daniel looked hastily away from him, fearful lest Baxter might be perplexed by the joy that shone in his face. To be connected, even so remotely, with Emily in the care of Beverly's children, was a happiness for which, a moment ago, he had not dared to hope.

"Let me deposit the amount with you twice a year," he said, "that will be both the easiest and the safest way."

"Maybe you 're right. And now it 's settled, ain't it, that you 're to come to my house to stay?"

"I must go back on the night train, I 'm sorry to say, but if you 'll let me I 'll drop in to supper. I remember your wife's biscuits of old," he added, smiling.

"You don't mean it! Well, it 'll tickle her to death, I reckon. It ain't likely, by the way, that you 'll find much to eat out at Cedar Hill, so you 'd better remember to have a snack before you start."

"Oh, I can fast until supper," returned Daniel, rising.

"Well, don't forget to give my respects to Miss Emily, and tell her I say not to worry, but to let the Lord take a turn. You 'll find things pretty topsy-turvy out there, Smith," he added, "but if you don't happen to have your Bible handy, I 'll lend you one and welcome. There 's the big one with gilt clasps the boys gave me last Christmas right on top of my desk."

"Oh, they 're sure to have one around," replied Ordway gravely, as he shook hands again before leaving the office.

From the top of the hill by the brick church, he caught a glimpse of the locust trees in Mrs. Twine's little yard, and turning in response to a remembered force of habit, he followed the board sidewalk to the whitewashed gate, which hung slightly open. In the street a small boy was busily flinging pebbles at the driver of a coal wagon, and calling the child to him, Ordway inquired if Mrs. Twine still lived in that house.

"Thar ain't no Mrs. Twine," replied the boy,

"she 's Mrs. Buzzy. She married my pa, that 's why I 'm here," he explained with a wink, as the door behind him flew open, and the lady in question rushed out to welcome her former lodger. "I hear her now—she 's a-comin'. My, an' she 's a tartar, she is!"

"It 's the best sight I 've laid eyes on sense I saw po', dear Bill on his deathbed," exclaimed the tartar, with delight. "Come right in, suh, come right in an' set down an' let me git a look at you. Thar ain't much cheer in the house now sence I 've lost Bill an' his sprightly ways, but the welcome 's warm if the house ain't."

She brought him ceremoniously into her closed parlour, and then at his request led him out of the stagnant air back into her comfortable, though untidy, kitchen. "I jest had my hand in the dough, suh, when I heard yo' voice," she observed apologetically, as she wiped off the bottom of a chair with her blue gingham apron. "I knew you 'd be set back to find out I did n't stay long a widder."

"I had n't even heard of Bill's death," he returned, "so it was something of a surprise to discover that you were no longer Mrs. Twine. Was it very sudden?"

"Yes, suh, 't was tremens—delicious tremens—an' they took him off so quick we did n't even have the crape in the house to tie on the front do' knob. You could a heard him holler all the way down to the cotton mills. He al'ays had powerful fine lungs, had Bill, an' if he 'd a-waited for his lungs to take him, he 'd be settin' thar right now, as peart as life."

Her eyes filled with tears, but wiping them hastily away with her apron, she took up a pan of potatoes and began paring them with a handleless knife.

"After your former marriages," he remarked doubtful as to whether he should offer sympathy or congratulations, "I should have thought you would have rested free for a time at least."

"It warn't my way, Mr. Smith," she responded, with a mournful shake of her head. "To be sure I had a few peaceful months arter Bill was gone, but the queer thing is how powerful soon peace can begin to pall on yo' taste. Why, I had n't been in mo'nin' for Bill goin' on to four months, when Silas Trimmer came along an' axed me, an' I said 'yes' as quick as that, jest out a the habit of it. I took off my mo'nin an' kep' comp'ny with him for quite a while, but we had a quarrel over Bill's tombstone, suh, for, bein' a close-fisted man, he warn 't willin' that I should put up as big a monument as I 'd a mind to. Well, I broke off with him on that account, for when it comes to choosin' between respect to the dead an' marriage to the livin' Silas Trimmer, I told him 'I reckon it won't take long for you to find out which way my morals air set.' He got mad as a hornet and went off, and I put on mo'nin agin an' wo' it steddy twil the year was up."

"And at the end of that time, I presume, you were wearied of widowhood and married Buzzy?"

"It 's a queer thing, suh," she observed, as she picked up a fresh potato and inspected it as attentively as if it had been a new proposal," it 's a queer

thing we ain't never so miserable in this world as when we ain't got the frazzle of an excuse to be so. Now, arter Bill went from me, thar was sech a quiet about that it began to git on my nerves, an' at last it got so that I could n't sleep at nights because I was no longer obleeged to keep one ear open to hear if he was comin' upstairs drunk or sober. Bless yo' heart, thar 's not a woman on earth that don't need some sort of distraction, an Bill was a long sight better at distractin' you than any circus I 've ever seen. Why, I even stopped goin' to 'em as long as he was livin', for it was a question every minute as to whether he was goin' to chuck you under the chin or lam you on the head, an' thar was a mortal lot a sprightliness about it. I reckon I must have got sort a sp'iled by the excitement, for when 't was took away, I jest did n't seem to be able to settle down. But thar are mighty few men with the little ways that Bill had," she reflected sadly.

"Yet your present husband is kind to you, is he not?"

"Oh, he 's kind enough, suh," she replied, with unutterable contempt, "but thar ain't nothin' in marriage that palls so soon as kindness. It 's unexpectedness that keeps you from goin' plum crazy with the sameness of it, an' thar ain't a bit of unexpectedness about Jake. He does everything so regular that thar 're times when I 'd like to bust him open jest to see how he is wound up inside, Naw, suh, it ain't the blows that wears a woman out, it 's the mortal sameness."

Clearly there was no comfort to be afforded her, and after a few words of practical advice on the subject of the children's education, he shook hands with her and started again in the direction of Cedar Hill.

The road with its November colours brought back to him the many hours when he had tramped over it in cheerfulness or in despair. The dull brown stretches of broomsedge, rolling like a high sea, the humble cabins, nestling so close to the ground, the pale clay road winding under the half-bared trees, from which the bright leaves were fluttering downward — these things made the breach of the years close as suddenly as if the divided scenery upon a stage had rolled together. While he walked alone here it was impossible to believe in the reality of his life in Botetourt.

As he approached Cedar Hill, the long melancholy avenue appeared to him as an appropriate shelter for Beverly's gentle ghost. He was surprised to discover with what tenderness he was able to surround the memory of that poetic figure since he stood again in the atmosphere which had helped to cultivate his indefinable charm. In Tappahannock Beverly's life might still be read inthe dry lines of prose, but beneath the historic influences of Cedar Hill it became, even in Ordway's eyes, a poem of sentiment.

Beyond the garden, he could see presently, through a gap in the trees, the silvery blur of life everlasting in the fallow land, which was steeped in afternoon sunshine. Somewhere from a nearer meadow there

floated a faint call of "Coopee ! Coopee ! Coopee !" to the turkeys lost in the sassafras. Then as he reached the house Aunt Mehitable's face looked down at him from a window in the second story ; and in response to her signs of welcome, he ascended the steps and entered the hall, where he stopped upon hearing a child's voice through the half open door of the dining-room.

"May I wear my coral beads even if I am in mourning, Aunt Emily?"

"Not yet, Bella," answered Emily's patient yet energetic tones. "Put them away awhile and they 'll be all the prettier when you take them out again."

"But can't I mourn for papa and mamma just as well in my beads as I can without them ?"

"That may be, dear, but we must consider what other people will say."

"What have other people got to do with my mourning, Aunt Emily ?"

"I don't know, but when you grow up you 'll find that they have something to do with everything that concerns you."

"Well, then, I shan't mourn at all," replied Bella, defiantly. "If you won't let me mourn in my coral beads, I shan't mourn a single bit without them."

"There, there, Bella, go on with your lesson," said Emily sternly, "you are a naughty girl."

At the sound of Ordway's step on the threshold, she rose to her feet, with a frightened movement, and stood, white and trembling, her hand pressed to her quivering bosom.

"You !" she cried out sharply, and there was a sound in her voice that brought him with a rush to her side. But as he reached her she drew quickly away, and hiding her face in her hands, broke into passionate weeping.

It was the first time that he had seen her lose her habit of self-command, and while he watched her, he felt that each of her broken sobs was wrung from his own heart.

"I was a fool not to prepare you," he said, as he placed a restraining hand on the awe-struck Bella. "You 've had so many shocks I ought to have known —I ought to have foreseen——"

At his words she looked up instantly, drying her tears on a child's dress which she was mending. "You came so suddenly that it startled me, that is all," she answered. "I thought for a minute that something had happened to you—that you were an apparition instead of a reality. I 've got into the habit of seeing ghosts of late."

"It 's a bad habit," he replied, as he pushed Bella from the room and closed the door after her. "But I 'm not a ghost, Emily, only a rough and common mortal. Baxter wrote me of Beverly's death, so I came thinking that I might be of some little use. Remember what you promised me in Botetourt."

As he looked at her now more closely, he saw that the clear brown of her skin had taken a sallow tinge, as if she were very weary, and that there were faint violet shadows in the hollows beneath her eyes. These outward signs of her weakness moved him to

a passion deeper and tenderer than he had ever felt before.

"I have not forgotten," she responded, after a moment in which she had recovered her usual bright aspect, "but there is really nothing one can do, it is all so simple. The farm has already been sold for debt, and so I shall start in the world without burdens, if without wealth."

"And the children? What of them?"

"That is arranged, too, very easily. Blair is fifteen now, and he will be given a scholarship at college. The girls will go to a friend of mine, who has a boarding school and has made most reasonable terms."

"And you?" he asked in a voice that expressed something of the longing he could not keep back. "Is there to be nothing but hard work for you in the future?"

"I am not afraid of work," she rejoined, smiling, "I am afraid only of reaching a place where work does not count."

As he made no answer, she talked on brightly, telling him of her plans for the future, of the progress the children had shown at their lessons, of the arrangements she had made for Aunt Mehitable and Micah, and of the innumerable changes which had occurred since he went away. So full of life, of energy, of hopefulness, were her face and voice that but for her black dress he would not have suspected that she had stood recently beside a deathbed. Yet as he listened to her, his heart was torn by the sharp anguish of parting, and when presently she began to

question him about his life in Botetourt, it was with difficulty that he forced himself to reply in a steady voice. All other memories of her would give way, he felt, before the picture of her in her black dress against the burning logs, with the red firelight playing over her white face and hands.

An hour later, when he rose to go, he took both of her hands in his, and bending his head laid his burning forehead against her open palms.

"Emily," he said, "tell me that you understand."

For a moment she gazed down on him in silence. Then, as he raised his eyes, she kissed him so softly that it seemed as if a spirit had touched his lips.

"I understand—forever," she answered.

At her words he straightened himself, as though a burden had fallen from him, and turning slowly away he went out of the house and back in the direction of Tappahannock.

## CHAPTER III

### Alice's Marriage

It was after ten o'clock when he returned to Botetourt, and he found upon reaching home that Lydia had already gone to bed, though a bottle of cough syrup, placed conspicuously upon his bureau, bore mute witness to the continuance of her solicitude. After so marked a consideration it seemed to him only decent that he should swallow a portion of the liquid; and he was in the act of filling the tablespoon she had left, when a ring at the door caused him to start until the medicine spilled from his hand. A moment later the ring was repeated more violently, and as he was aware that the servants had already left the house, he threw on his coat, and lighting a candle, went hurriedly out into the hall and down the dark staircase. The sound of a hand beating on the panels of the door quickened his steps almost into a run, and he was hardly surprised, when he had withdrawn the bolts, to find Alice's face looking at him from the darkness outside. She was pale and thin, he saw at the first glance, and there was an angry look in her eyes, which appeared unnaturally large in their violent circles,

"I thought you would never open to me, papa," she said fretfully as she crossed the threshold. "Oh,

I am so glad to see you again! Feel how cold my hands are, I am half frozen."

Taking her into his arms, he kissed her face passionately as it rested for an instant against his shoulder.

"Are you alone, Alice? Where is your husband?"

Without answering, she raised her head, shivering slightly, and then turning away, entered the library where a log fire was smouldering to ashes. As he threw on more wood, she came over to the hearth, and stretched out her hands to the warmth with a nervous gesture. Then the flame shot up and he saw that her beauty had gained rather than lost by the change in her features. She appeared taller, slenderer, more distinguished, and the vivid black and white of her colouring was intensified by the perfect simplicity of the light cloth gown and dark furs she wore.

"Oh, he's at home," she answered, breaking the long silence. "I mean he 's in the house in Henry Street, but we had a quarrel an hour after we got back, so I put on my hat again and came away. I 'm not going back — not unless he makes it bearable for me to live with him. He 's such—such a brute that it 's as much as one can do to put up with it, and it 's been killing me by inches for the last months. I meant to write you about it, but somehow I could n't, and yet I knew that I could n't write at all without letting you see it. Oh, he 's unbearable!" she exclaimed, with a tremor of disgust. "You will never know—you will never be able to imagine all that I 've been through!"

"But is he unkind to you, Alice? Is he cruel?"

She bared her arm with a superb disdainful gesture, and he saw three rapidly discolouring bruises on her delicate flesh. The sight filled him with loathing rather than anger, and he caught her to him almost fiercely as if he would hold her not only against Geoffrey Heath, but against herself.

"You shall not go back to him," he said, "I will not permit it!"

"The worst part is," she went on vehemently, as if he had not spoken, "that it is about money —money—always money. He has millions, his lawyers told me so, and yet he makes me give an account to him of every penny that I spend. I married him because I thought I should be rich and free, but he 's been hardly better than a miser since the day of the wedding. He wants me to dress like a dowdy, for all his wealth, and I can't buy a ring that he does n't raise a terrible fuss. I hate him more and more every day I live, but it makes no difference to him as long as he has me around to look at whenever he pleases. I have to pay him back for every dollar that he gives me, and if I keep away from him and get cross, he holds back my allowance. Oh, it 's a dog's life!" she exclaimed wildly, "and it is killing me!"

"You shan't bear it, Alice. As long as I 'm alive you are safe with me."

"For a time I could endure it because of the travelling and the strange countries," she resumed, ignoring the tenderness in his voice, "but Geoffrey

was so frightfully jealous that if I so much as spoke to a man, he immediately flew into a rage. He even made me leave the opera one night in Paris because a Russian Grand Duke in the next box looked at me so hard."

Throwing herself into a chair, she let her furs slip from her shoulders, and sat staring moodily into the fire. "I 've sworn a hundred times that I 'd leave him," she said, "and yet I 've never done it until to-night."

While she talked on feverishly, he untied her veil, which she had tossed back, and taking off her hat, pressed her gently against the cushions he had placed in her chair.

"You look so tired, darling, you must rest," he said.

"Rest! You may as well tell me to sleep!" she exclaimed. Then her tone altered abruptly, and for the first time, she seemed able to penetrate beyond her own selfish absorption. "Oh, you poor papa, how very old you look!" she said.

Taking his head in her arms, she pressed it to her bosom and cried softly for a minute. "It 's all my fault—everything is my fault, but I can't help it. I 'm made that way." Then pushing him from her suddenly, she sprang to her feet and began walking up and down in her restless excited manner.

"Let me get you a glass of wine, Alice," he said, "you are trembling all over."

She shook her head. "It is n't that—it is n't that. It's the awful—awful money. If it was n't

for the money I could go on. Oh, I wish I 'd never spent a single dollar! I wish I 'd always gone in rags!"

Again he forced her back into her chair and again, after a minute of quiet, she rose to her feet and broke into hysterical sobs.

"All that I have is yours, Alice, you know that," he said in the effort to soothe her, "and, besides, your own property is hardly less than two hundred thousand."

"But Uncle Richard won't give it to me," she returned angrily. "I wrote and begged him on my knees and he still refused to let me have a penny more than my regular income. It 's all tied up, he says, in investments, and that until I am twenty-one it must remain in his hands."

With a frantic movement, she reached for her muff, and drew from it a handful of crumpled papers, which she held out to him. "Geoffrey found these to-night and they brought on the quarrel," she said. "Yesterday he gave me this bracelet and he seems to think I could live on it for a month!" She stretched out her arm, as she spoke, and showed him a glittering circle of diamonds immediately below the blue finger marks. "There 's a sable coat still that he does n't know a thing of," she finished with a moan.

Bending under the lamp, he glanced hurriedly over the papers she had given him, and then rose to his feet still holding them in his hand.

"These alone come to twenty thousand dollars, Alice," he said with a gentle sternness.

"And there are others, too," she cried, making no effort to control her convulsive sobs. "There are others which I did n't dare even to let him see."

For a moment he let her weep without seeking to arrest her tears.

"Are you sure this will be a lesson to you?" he asked at last. "Will you be careful—very careful from this time?"

"Oh, I 'll never spend a penny again. I 'll stay in Botetourt forever," she promised desperately, eager to retrieve the immediate instant by the pledge of a more or less uncertain future.

"Then we must help you," he said. "Among us all—Uncle Richard, your mother and I—it will surely be possible."

Pacified at once by his assurance, she sat down again and dried her eyes in her muff.

"It seems a thousand years since I went away," she observed, glancing about her for the first time. "Nothing is changed and yet everything appears to be different."

"And are you different also?" he asked.

"Oh, I 'm older and I 've seen a great deal more," she responded, with a laugh which came almost as a shock to him after her recent tears, "but I still want to go everywhere and have everything just as I used to."

"But I thought you were determined to stay in Botetourt for the future?" he suggested.

"Well, so I am, I suppose," she returned dismally, "there 's nothing else for me to do, is there?"

"Nothing that I see."

"Then I may as well make up my mind to be miserable forever. It 's so frightfully gloomy in this old house, is n't it? How is mamma?"

"She 's just as you left her, neither very well nor very sick."

"So it 's exactly what it always was, I suppose, and will drive me to distraction in a few weeks. Is Dick away?"

"He 's at college, and he 's doing finely."

"Of course he is—that 's why he 's such a bore."

"Let Dick alone, Alice, and tell me about yourself. So you went to Europe immediately after I saw you in Washington?"

"Two days later. I was dreadfully seasick, and Geoffrey was as disagreeable as he could be, and made all kinds of horrid jokes about me."

"You went straight to Paris, did n't you?"

"As soon as we landed, but Geoffrey made me come away in three weeks because he said I spent so much money." Her face clouded again at the recollection of her embarrassments. "Oh, we had awful scenes, but I had n't even a wedding dress, you know, and French dressmakers are so frightfully expensive. One of them charged me five thousand dollars for a gown—but he told me that it was really cheap, because he 'd sold one to another American the day before for twelve thousand. I don't know who her husband is," she added wistfully, "but I wish I were married to him."

The wildness of her extravagance depressed him even more than her excessive despair had done; and

he wondered if the vagueness of her ideas of wealth was due to the utter lack in her of the imagination which foresees results? She had lived since her girlhood in a quiet Virginia town, her surroundings had been comparatively simple, and she had never been thrown, until her marriage, amid the corrupting influences of great wealth, yet, in spite of these things, she had squandered a fortune as carelessly as a child might have strewed pebbles upon the beach. Her regret at last had come not through realisation of her fault, but in the face of the immediate punishment which threatened her.

"So he got you out of Paris? Well, I 'm glad of that," he remarked.

"He was perfectly brutal about it, I wish you could have heard him. Then we went down into Italy and did nothing for months but look at old pictures—at least I did, he would n't come—and float around in a gondola until I almost died from the monotony. It was only after I found a lace shop, where they had the most beautiful things, that he would take me away, and then he insisted upon going to some little place up in the Alps because he said he did n't suppose I could possibly pack the mountains into my trunks. Oh, those dreadful mountains! They were so glaring I could never go out of doors until the afternoon, and Geoffrey would go off climbing or shooting and leave me alone in a horrid little hotel where there was nobody but a one-eyed German army officer, and a woman missionary who was bracing herself for South Africa.

She wore a knitted jersey all day and a collar which looked as if it would cut her head off if she ever forgot herself and bent her neck." Her laughter, the delicious, irresponsible laughter of a child, rippled out: "She asked me one day if our blacks wore draperies? The ones in South Africa did n't, and it made it very embarrassing sometimes, she said, to missionary to them. Oh, you can't imagine what I suffered from her, and Geoffrey was so horrid about it, and insisted that she was just the sort of companion that I needed. So one day when he happened to be in the writing-room where she was, I locked the door on the outside and threw the key down into the gorge. There was n't any locksmith nearer than twenty miles, and when they sent for him he was away. Oh, it was simply too funny for words! Geoffrey on the inside was trying to break the heavy lock and the proprietor on the outside was protesting that he must n't, and all the time we could hear the missionary begging everybody please to be patient. She said if it were required of her she was quite prepared to stay locked up all night, but Geoffrey was n't, so he swung himself down by the branches of a tree which grew near the window."

All her old fascination had come back to her with her change of mood, and he forgot to listen to her words while he watched the merriment sparkle in her deep blue eyes. It was a part of his destiny that he should submit to her spell, as, he supposed, even Geoffrey submitted at times.

He was about to make some vague comment

upon her story, when her face changed abruptly into an affected gravity, and turning his head, he saw that Lydia had come noiselessly into the room, and was advancing to meet her daughter with outstretched arms.

"Why, Alice, my child, what a beautiful surprise! When did you come?"

As Alice started forward to her embrace, Ordway noticed that there was an almost imperceptible tightening of the muscles of her body.

"Only a few minutes ago," she replied, with the characteristic disregard of time which seemed, in some way, to belong to her inability to consider figures, "and, oh, I am so glad to be back! You are just as lovely as ever."

"Well, you are lovelier," said Lydia, kissing her, and adding a moment afterward, as the result of her quick, woman's glance, "what a charming gown!"

Alice shrugged her shoulders, with a foreign gesture which she had picked up. "Oh, you must see some of my others," she replied, "I wish that my trunks would come, but I forgot they were all sent to the other house, and I have n't even a nightgown? Will you lend me a nightgown, mamma? I have some of the loveliest you ever saw which were embroidered for me by the nuns in a French convent."

"So, you 'll spend the night?" said Lydia, "I 'm so glad, dear, and I'll go up and see if your bed has sheets on it."

"Oh, it's not only for the night," returned Alice,

defiantly, "I 've come back for good. I've left Geoffrey, have n't I, papa?"

"I hope so, darling," answered Ordway, coming for the first time over to where they stood.

"Left Geoffrey?" repeated Lydia. "Do you mean you 've separated?"

"I mean I 'm never going back again—that I detest him—that I 'd rather die—that I 'll kill myself before I 'll do it."

Lydia received her violence with the usual resigned sweetness that she presented to an impending crisis.

"But, my dear, my dear, a divorce is a horrible thing!" she wailed.

"Well, it is n't half so horrible as Geoffrey," retorted Alice.

Ordway, who had turned away again as Lydia spoke, came forward at the girl's angry words, and caught the hand that she had stretched out as if to push her mother from her.

"Let's be humbly grateful that we've got her back," he said, smiling, "while we prepare her bed."

## CHAPTER IV

### The Power of the Blood

When he came out into the hall the next morning, Lydia met him, in her dressing-gown, on her way from Alice's room.

"How is she?" he asked eagerly. "Did she sleep?"

"No, she was very restless, so I stayed with her. She went home a quarter of an hour ago."

"Went home? Do you mean she 's gone back to that brute?"

A servant's step sounded upon the staircase, and with her unfailing instinct for propriety, she drew back into his room and lowered her voice.

"She said that she was too uncomfortable without her clothes and her maid, but I think she had definitely made up her mind to return to him."

"But when did she change? You heard her say last night that she would rather kill herself."

"Oh, you know Alice," she responded a little wearily; and for the first time it occurred to him that the exact knowledge of Alice might belong, after all, not to himself, but to her.

"You think, then," he asked, "that she meant none of her violent protestations of last night?"

"I am sure that she meant them while she uttered them—not a minute afterward. She can't help

being dramatic any more than she can help being beautiful."

"Are you positive that you said nothing to bring about her decision? Did you influence her in any way?"

"I did nothing more that tell her that she must make her choice once for all—that she must either go back to Geoffrey Heath and keep up some kind of appearances, or publicly separate herself from him. I let her see quite plainly that a state of continual quarrels was impossible and indecent."

Her point of view was so entirely sensible that he found himself hopelessly overpowered by its unassailable logic.

"So she has decided to stick to him for better or for worse, then?"

"For the present at all events. She realised fully, I think, how much she would be obliged to sacrifice by returning home?"

"Sacrifice? Good God, what?" he demanded.

"Oh, well, you see, Geoffrey lives in a fashion that is rather grand for Botetourt. He travels a great deal, and he makes her gorgeous presents when he is in a good humour. She seemed to feel that if we could only settle these bills for her, she would be able to bring about a satisfactory adjustment. I was surprised to find how quietly she took it all this morning. She had forgotten entirely, I believe, the scene she made downstairs last night."

This was his old Alice,he reflected in baffled silence, and apparently he would never attain to the

critical judgment of her. Well, in any case, he was able to do justice to Lydia's admirable detachment.

"I suppose I may have a talk with Heath anyway?" he said at last.

"She particularly begs you not to, and I feel strongly that she is right."

"Does she expect me to sit quietly by and see it go on forever? Why, there were bruises on her arm that he had made with his fingers."

Lydia paled as she always did when one of the brutal facts of life was thrust on her notice.

"Oh, she doesn't think that will happen again. It appears that she had lost her temper and tried her best to infuriate him. He is still very much in love with her at times, and she hopes that by a little diplomacy she may be able to arrange matters between them."

"Diplomacy with that insufferable cad! Pshaw!"

Lydia sighed, not in exasperation, but with the martyr's forbearance.

"It is really a crisis in Alice's life," she said, "and we must treat it with seriousness."

"I was never more serious in my life. I 'm melancholy. I 'm abject."

"Last night she told me that Geoffrey threatened to go West and get a divorce, and this frightened her."

"But I thought it was the very thing she wanted," he urged in bewilderment. "Had n't she left him last night for good and all?"

"She might leave him, but she could not give up his money. It is impossible, I suppose, for you to

realise her complete dependence upon wealth—the absurdity of her ideas about the value of money. Why, her income of five thousand which Uncle Richard allows her would not last her a month."

"I realised a little of this when I glanced over those bills she gave me."

"Of course we shall pay those ourselves, but what is twenty thousand dollars to her, when Geoffrey seems to have paid out a hundred thousand already. He began, I can see, by being very generous, but she confessed to me this morning that other bills were still to come in which she would not dare to let him see. I told her that she must try to meet these out of her income, and that we would reduce our living expenses as much as possible in order to pay those she gave you."

"I shall ask Uncle Richard to advance this out of my personal property," he said.

"But he will not do it. You know how scrupulous he is about all such matters, and he told me the other day that your father's will had clearly stated that the money was not to be touched unless he should deem it for your interest to turn it over to you."

Her command of the business situation amazed him, until he remembered her long conversations with Richard Ordway, whose interests were confined within strictly professional limits. His fatal mistake in the past, he saw now, was that he had approached her, not as a fellow mortal, but as a divinity; for the farther he receded from the attitude of worship, the more was he able to appreciate the quality of her prac-

tical virtues. In spite of her poetic exterior, it was in the rosy glow of romance that she showed now as barest of attractions. The bottle of cough syrup on his bureau still testified to her ability to sympathise in all cases where the imagination was not required to lend its healing insight.

"But surely it is to my interest to save Alice," he said after a pause.

"I think he will feel that it must be done by the family, by us all," she answered, "he has always had so keen a sense of honour in little things."

An hour later, when he broached the subject to Richard in his office, he found that Lydia was right, as usual, in her prediction; and with a flash or ironic humour, he pictured her as enthroned above his destiny, like a fourth fate who spun the unyielding thread of common sense.

"Of course the debt must be paid if it is a condition of Alice's reconciliation with her husband," said the old man, "but I shall certainly not sacrifice your securities in order to do it. Such an act would be directly against the terms of your father's will."

There was no further concession to be had from him, so Daniel turned to his work, half in disappointment, half in admiration of his uncle's loyalty to the written word.

When he went home to luncheon Lydia told him that she had seen Alice, who had appeared seriously disturbed, though she had shown her, with evident enjoyment, a number of exquisite Paris gowns. "She had a sable coat, also, in her closet, which

could not have cost less, I should have supposed, than forty thousand dollars—the kind of coat that a Russian Grand Duchess might have worn—but when I spoke of it, she grew very much depressed and changed the subject. Did you talk to Uncle Richard? and was I right?"

"You 're always right," he admitted despondently, "but do you think, then, that I 'd better not see Alice to-day?"

"Perhaps it would be wiser to wait until to-morrow. Geoffrey is in a very difficult humour, she says, more brutally indifferent to her than he has been since her marriage."

"Is n't that all the more reason she ought to have her family about her?"

"She says not. It 's easier to deal with him, she feels, alone—and any way Uncle Richard will call there this afternoon."

"Oh, Uncle Richard!" he groaned, as he went out.

In the evening there was no news beyond a reassuring visit from Richard Ordway, who stopped by, for ten minutes, on his way from an interview with Geoffrey Heath. "To tell the truth I found him less obstinate than I had expected," he said, "and there 's no doubt, I fear, that he has some show of justice upon his side. He has agreed now to make Alice a very liberal allowance from the first of April, provided she will promise to make no more bills, and to live until then within her own income. He told me that he was obliged to retrench for the next six months in order to meet his obligations without

touching his investments. It seems that he had bought very largely on margin, and the shrinkages in stocks has forced him to pay out a great deal of money recently."

"I knew you would manage it, Uncle, I relied on you absolutely," said Lydia, sweetly.

"I did only my duty, my child," he responded, as he held out his hand.

The one good result of the anxiety of the last twenty-four hours—the fact that it had brought Lydia and himself into a kind of human connection —had departed, Daniel observed, when he sat down to dinner, separated from her by six yellow candle shades and a bowl of gorgeous chrysanthemums. After a casual comment upon the soup, and the pleasant reminder that Dick would be home for Thanksgiving, the old uncomfortable silence fell between them. She had just remarked that the roast was a little overdone, and he had agreed with her from sheer politeness, when a sharp ring at the bell sent the old Negro butler hurrying out into the hall. An instant later there was a sound of rapid footsteps, and Alice, wearing a long coat, which slipped from her bare shoulders as she entered, came rapidly forward and threw herself into Ordway's arms, with an uncontrollable burst of tears.

"My child, my child, what is it?" he questioned, while Lydia, rising from the table with a disturbed face, but an unruffled manner, remarked to the butler that he need not serve the dessert.

"Come into the library, Alice, it is quieter there,"

she said, putting her arm about her daughter, with an authoritative pressure.

"O, papa, I will never see him again! You must tell him that. I shall never see him again," she cried, regardless alike of Lydia's entreaties and the restraining presence of the butler. "Go to him to-night and tell him that I will never—never go back."

"I 'll tell him, Alice, and I 'll do it with a great deal of pleasure," he answered soothingly, as he led her into the library and closed the door.

"But you must go at once. I want him to know it at once."

"I 'll go this very hour—I 'll go this very minute, if you honestly mean it."

"Would it not be better to wait until to-morrow, Alice?" suggested Lydia. "Then you will have time to quiet down and to see things rationally."

"I don't want to quiet down," sobbed Alice, angrily, "I want him to know now—this very instant—that he has gone too far—that I will not stand it. He told me a minute ago—the beast!—that he 'd like to see the man who would be fool enough to keep me—that if I went he 'd find a handsomer woman within a week!"

"Well, I 'll see him, darling," said Ordway. "Sit here with your mother, and have a good cry and talk things over."

As he spoke he opened the door and went out into the hall, where he got into his overcoat.

"Remember last night and don't say too much, Daniel," urged Lydia in a warning whisper, coming

after him, "she is quite hysterical now and does not realise what she is saying."

"Oh, I 'll remember," he returned, and a minute later, he closed the front door behind him.

On his way to the Heath house in Henry Street, he planned dispassionately his part in the coming interview, and he resolved that he would state Alice's position with as little show of feeling as it was possible for him to express. He would tell Heath candidly that, with his consent, Alice should never return to him, but he would say this in a perfectly quiet and inoffensive manner. If there was to be a scene, he concluded calmly, it should be made entirely by Geoffrey. Then, as he went on, he said to himself, that he had grown tired and old, and that he lacked now the decision which should carry one triumphantly over a step like this. Even his anger against Alice's husband had given way to a dragging weariness, which seemed to hold him back as he ascended the brown-stone steps and laid his hand on the door bell. When the door was opened, and he followed the servant through the long hall, ornamented by marble statues, to the smoking-room at the end, he was conscious again of that sense of utter incapacity which had been bred in him by his life in Botetourt.

Geoffrey, after a full dinner, was lounging, with a cigar and a decanter of brandy, over a wood fire, and as his visitor entered he rose from his chair with a lazy shake of his whole person.

"I don't believe I 've ever met you before, Mr. Ordway," he remarked, as he held out his hand, "though

I 've known you by sight for several years. Won't you sit down?" With a single gesture he motioned to a chair and indicated the cigars and the brandy on a little table at his right hand.

At his first glance Ordway had observed that he had been in a rage or drinking heavily—probably both; and he was seized by a sudden terror at the thought that Alice had been so lately at the mercy of this large red and black male animal. Yet, in spite of the disgust with which the man inspired him, he was forced to admit that as far as a mere physical specimen went, he had rarely seen his equal. His body was superbly built, and but for his sullen and brutal expression, his face would have been remarkable for its masculine beauty.

"No, I won't sit down, thank you," replied Ordway, after a short pause. "What I have to say can be said better standing, I think."

"Then fire away!" returned Geoffrey, with a coarse laugh. "It 's about Alice, I suppose, and it 's most likely some darn rot she 's sent you with."

"It 's probably less rot than you imagine. I have taken it upon myself to forbid her returning to you. Your treatment of her has made it impossible that she should remain in your house."

"Well, I 've treated her a damned sight better than she deserved," rejoined Geoffrey, scowling, while his face, inflamed by the brandy he had drunk, burned to a dull red; "it is n't her fault, I can tell you, that she has n't put me into the poorhouse in six months."

"I admit that she has been very extravagant, and so does she."

"Extravagant? So that is what you call it, is it? Well, she spent more in three weeks in Paris than my father did in his whole lifetime. I paid out a hundred thousand for her, and even then I could hardly get her away. But I won't pay the bills any longer, I 've told her that. They may go into court about it and get their money however they can."

"In the future there will be no question of that."

"You think so, do you? Now I 'll bet you whatever you please that she 's back here in this house again before the week is up. She knows on which side her bread is buttered, and she won't stay in that dull old place, not for all you 're worth."

"She shall never return to you with my consent."

"Did she wait for that to marry me?" demanded Geoffrey, laughing uproariously at his wit, "though I can tell you now, that it makes precious little difference to me whether she comes or stays."

"She shall never do it," said Ordway, losing his temper. Then as he uttered the words, he remembered Lydia's warning and added more quietly, "she shall never do it if I can help it."

"It makes precious little difference to me," repeated Geoffrey, "but she 'll be a blamed fool if she does n't, and for all her foolishness, she is n't so big a fool as you think her."

"She has been wrong in her extravagance, as I said before, but she is very young, and her childishness is no excuse for your brutality."

Rage, or the brandy, or both together, flamed up hotly in Geoffrey's face.

"I 'd like to know what right you have to talk about brutality?" he sneered.

"I 've the right of any man to keep another from ill-treating his daughter."

"Well, you 're a nice one with your history to put on these highfaluting, righteous airs, are n't you?"

For an instant the unutterable disgust in Ordway's mind was like physical nausea. What use was it, after all, to bandy speeches, he questioned, with a mere drunken animal? His revulsion of feeling had moved him to take a step toward the door, when the sound of the words Geoffrey uttered caused him to stop abruptly and stand listening.

"Much good you 'll do her when she hears about that woman you 've been keeping down at Tappahannock. As if I didn't know that you 'd been running back there again after that Brooke girl——"

The words were choked back in his throat, for before they had passed his lips Ordway had swung quickly round and struck him full in the mouth.

With the blow it seemed to Daniel that all the violence in his nature was loosened. A sensation that was like the joy of health, of youth, of manhood, rushed through his veins, and in the single exalted instant when he looked down on Geoffrey's prostrate figure, he felt himself to be not only trium-

phant, but immortal. All that his years of self-sacrifice had not done for him was accomplished by that explosive rush of energy through his arm.

There was blood on his hand and as he glanced down, he saw that Geoffrey, with a bleeding mouth, was struggling, dazed and half drunk, to his feet. Ordway looked at him and laughed—the laugh of the boastful and victorious brute. Then turning quickly, he took up his hat and went out of the house and down into the street.

The physical exhilaration produced by the muscular effort was still tingling through his body, and while it lasted he felt younger, stronger, and possessed of a courage that was almost sublime. When he reached home and entered the library where Lydia and Alice were sitting together, there was a boyish lightness and confidence in his step.

"Oh, papa!" cried Alice, standing up, "tell me about it. What did he do?"

Ordway laughed again, the same laugh with which he had looked down on Geoffrey lying half stunned at his feet.

"I did n't wait to see," he answered, "but I rather think he got up off the floor."

"You mean you knocked him down?" asked Lydia, in an astonishment that left her breathless.

"I cut his mouth, I 'm sure," he replied, wiping his hand from which the blood ran, "and I hope I knocked out one or two of his teeth."

Then the exhilaration faded as quickly as it had come, for as Lydia looked up at him, while he stood

there wiping the blood from his bruised knuckles, he saw, for the first time since his return to Botetourt, that there was admiration in her eyes. So it was the brute, after all, and not the spirit that had triumphed over her.

## CHAPTER V

### The House of Dreams

From that night there was a new element in Lydia's relation to him, an increased consideration, almost a deference, as if, for the first time, he had shown himself capable of commanding her respect. This change, which would have pleased him, doubtless, twenty years before, had only the effect now of adding to his depression, for he saw in it a tribute from his wife not to his higher, but to his lower nature. All his patient ideals, all his daily self-sacrifice, had not touched her as had that one instant's violence; and it occurred to him, with a growing recognition of the hopeless inconsistency of life, that if he had treated her with less delicacy, less generosity, if he had walked roughshod over her feminine scruples, instead of yielding to them, she might have entertained for him by this time quite a wholesome wifely regard. Then the mere possibility disgusted him, and he saw that to have compromised with her upon any lower plane would have been always morally repugnant to him. After all, the dominion of the brute was not what he was seeking.

On the morning after his scene with Geoffrey, Alice came to him and begged for the minutest particulars of the quarrel. She wanted to know how

it had begun? If Geoffrey had been really horrible? And if he had noticed the new bronze dragon she had bought for the hall? Upon his replying that he had not, she seemed disappointed, he thought, for a minute.

"It 's very fine," she said, "I bought it from what 's-his-name, that famous man in Paris? If I ever have money enough I shall get the match to it, so there 'll be the pair of them." Then seeing his look of astonishment, she hastened to correct the impression she had made. "Of course, I mean that I 'd like to have done it, if I had been going to live there."

"It would take more than a bronze dragon, or a pair of them, to make that house a home, dear," was his only comment.

"But it 's very handsome," she remarked after a moment, "everything in it is so much more costly than the things here." He made no rejoinder, and she added with vehemence, "but of course, I would n't go back, not even if it were a palace!"

Then a charming merriment seized her, and she clung to him and kissed him and called him a dozen silly pet names. "No, she won't ever, ever play in that horrid old house again," she sang gaily between her kisses.

For several days these exuberant spirits lasted, and then he prepared himself to meet the inevitable reaction. Her looks drooped, she lost her colour and grew obviously bored, and in the end she complained openly that there was nothing for her to do

in the house, and that she could n't go out of doors because she had n't the proper clothes. To his reminder that it was she herself who had prevented his sending for her trunks, she replied that there was plenty of time, and that, "besides nobody could pack them unless she was there to overlook it."

"If anybody is obliged to go back there, for heaven's sake, let me be the one," he urged desperately at last.

"To knock out more of poor Geoffrey's teeth? Oh, you naughty, naughty, papa!"—she cried, lifting a reproving finger. The next instant her laughter bubbled out at the delightful picture of "papa in the midst of her Paris gowns. I 'd be so afraid you 'd roll up Geoffrey in my precious laces," she protested, half seriously.

For a week nothing more was said on the subject, and then she remarked irritably that her room was cold and she had n't her quilted silk dressing-gown. When he asked her to ride with him, she declared that her old habit was too tight for her and her new one was at the other house. When he suggested driving instead, she replied that she had n't her fur coat and she would certainly freeze without it. At last one bright, cold day, when he came up to luncheon, Lydia told him, with her strange calmness, that Alice had gone back to her husband.

"I knew it would come in time," she said, and he bowed again before her unerring prescience.

"Do you mean to tell me that she's willing to

put up with Heath for the sake of a little extra luxury?" he demanded.

"Oh, that 's a part of it. She likes the newness of the house and the air of costliness about it, but most of all, she feels that she could never settle down to our monotonous way of living. Geoffrey promised her to take her to Europe again in the summer and I think she began to grow restless when it appeared that she might have to give it up."

"But one of us could have taken her to Europe, if that 's all she wanted. You could have gone with her."

"Not in Alice's way, we could never have afforded it. She told me this when I offered to go with her if she would definitely separate from Geoffrey."

"Then you did n't want her to go back? You did n't encourage it?"

"I encouraged her to behave with decency—and this is n't decent."

"No, I admit that. It decidedly is not."

"Yet we have no assurance that she won't fly in upon us at dinner to-night, with all the servants about," she reflected mournfully.

His awful levity broke out as it always did whenever she invoked the sanctity of convention.

"In that case had n't we better serve ourselves until she has made up her mind?" he inquired.

But the submission of the martyr is proof even against caustic wit, and she looked at him, after a minute, with a smile of infinite patience.

"For myself I can bear anything," she answered,

"but I feel that for her it is shocking to make things so public."

It was shocking. In spite of his flippancy he felt the vulgarity of it as acutely as she felt it; and he was conscious of something closely akin to relief, when Richard Ordway dropped in after dinner to tell them that Alice and Geoffrey had come to a complete reconciliation.

"But will it last?" Lydia questioned, in an uneasy voice.

"We 'll hope so at all events," replied the old man, "they appeared certainly to be very friendly when I came away. Whatever happens it is surely to Alice's interest that she should be kept out of a public scandal."

They were still discussing the matter, after Richard had gone, when the girl herself ran in, bringing Geoffrey, and fairly brilliant with life and spirits.

"We 've decided to forget everything disagreeable," she said, "we 're going to begin over again and be nice and jolly, and if I don't spend too much money, we are going to Egypt in April."

"If you 're happy, then I 'm satisfied," returned Ordway, and he held out his hand to Geoffrey by way of apology.

To do the young man justice, he appeared to cherish no resentment for the blow, though he still bore a scar on his upper lip. He looked heavy and handsome, and rather amiable in a dull way, and the one discovery Daniel made about him was that he entertained a profound admiration for Richard

Ordway. Still, when everybody in Botetourt shared his sentiment, this was hardly deserving of notice.

As the weeks went on it looked as if peace were really restored, and even Lydia's face lost its anxious foreboding, when she gazed on the assembled family at Thanksgiving. Dick had grown into a quiet, distinguished looking young fellow, more than ever like his Uncle Richard, and it was touching to watch his devotion to his delicate mother. At least Lydia possessed one enduring consolation in life, Ordway reflected, with a rush of gratitude.

In the afternoon Alice drove with him out into the country, along the pale brown November roads, and he felt, while he sat beside her, with her hand clasped tightly in his under the fur robe, that she was again the daughter of his dreams, who had flown to his arms in the terrible day of his homecoming. She was in one of her rare moods of seriousness, and when she lifted her eyes to his, it seemed to him that they held a new softness, a deeper blueness. Something in her face brought back to him the memory of Emily as she had looked down at him when he knelt before her: and again he was aware of some subtle link which bound together in his thoughts the two women whom he loved.

"There 's something I 've wanted to tell you, papa, first of all," said Alice, pressing his hand, "I want you to know it before anybody else because you 've always loved me and stood by me from the beginning. Now shut your eyes while I tell you, and hold fast to my hand. O papa, there 's to be

really and truly a baby in the spring, and even if it 's a boy—I hope it will be a girl—you 'll promise to love it and be good to it, won't you?"

"Love your child? Alice, my darling!" he cried, and his voice broke.

She raised her hand to his cheek with a little caressing gesture, which had always been characteristic of her, and as he opened his eyes upon her, her beauty shone, he thought, with a light that blinded him.

"I hope it will be a little girl with blue eyes and fair hair like mamma's," she resumed softly. "It will be better than playing with dolls, won't it? I always loved dolls, you know. Do you remember the big wax doll you gave me when I was six years old, and how her voice got out of order and she used to crow instead of talking? Well, I kept her for years and years, and even after I was a big girl, and wore long dresses, and did up my hair, I used to take her out sometimes and put on her clothes. Only I was ashamed of it and used to lock the door so no one could see me. But this little girl will be real, you know, and that 's ever so much more fun, is n't it? And you shall help teach her to walk, and to ride when she 's big enough; and I 'll dress her in the loveliest dresses, with French embroidered ruffles, and a little blue bonnet with bunches of feathers, like one in Paris. Only she can't wear that until she 's five years old, can she?"

"And now you will have something to think of, Alice, you will be bored no longer?"

"I shall enjoy buying the little things so much, but it 's too soon yet to plan about them. Papa, do you think Geoffrey will fuss about money when he hears this?"

"I hope not, dear, but you must be careful. The baby won't need to be extravagant, just at first."

"But she must have pretty clothes, of course, papa. It would n't be kind to the little thing to make her look ugly, would it?"

"Are simple things always ugly?"

"Oh, but they cost just as much if they 're fine —and I had beautiful clothes when I came. Mamma has told me about them."

She ran on breathlessly, radiant with the promise of motherhood, dwelling in fancy upon the small blond ideal her imagination had conjured into life.

It was dark when they returned to town, and when Daniel entered his door, after leaving Alice in Henry Street, he found that the lamps were already lit in the library. As he passed up the staircase, he glanced into the room, and saw that Lydia and Dick were sitting together before the fire, the boy resting his head on her knees, while her fragile hand played caressingly with his hair. They did not look up at his footsteps, and his heart was so warm with happiness that even the picture of mother and son in the firelit room appeared dim beside it.

When he opened his door he found a bright fire in his grate, and throwing off his coat, he sat down in an easy chair with his eyes on the glowing coals. The beneficent vision that he had brought home with

him was reflected now in the red heart of the fire, and while he gazed on it, he told himself that the years of his loneliness, and his inner impoverishment, were ended forever. The path of age showed to him no longer as hard and destitute, but as a peaceful road along which he might travel hopefully with young feet to keep him company. With a longing, which no excess of the imagination could exhaust, he saw Alice's child as she had seen it in her maternal rapture—as something immortally young and fair and innocent. He thought of the moment so long ago, when they had first placed Alice in his arms, and it seemed to him that this unborn child was only a renewal of the one he had held that day—that he would reach out his arms to it with that same half human, half mystic passion. Even to-day he could almost feel the soft pressure of her little body, and he hardly knew whether it was the body of Alice or of her child. Then suddenly it seemed to him that the reality faded from his consciousness and the dream began, for while he sat there he heard the patter of the little feet across his floor, and felt the little hands creep softly over his lips and brow. Oh, the little hands that would bring healing and love in their touch!

And he understood as he looked forward now into the dreaded future, that the age to which he was travelling was only an immortal youth.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Ultimate Choice

On Christmas Eve a heavy snowstorm set in, and as there was but little work in the office that day, he took a long walk into the country before going home to luncheon. By the time he came back to town the ground was already covered with snow, which was blown by a high wind into deep drifts against the houses. Through the thick, whirling flakes the poplars stood out like white ghosts of trees, each branch outlined in a delicate tracery, and where the skeletons of last spring's flowers still clung to the boughs, the tiny cups were crowned with clusters of frozen blossoms.

As he passed Richard's house, the sight of his aunt's fair head at the window arrested his steps, and going inside, he found her filling yarn stockings for twenty poor children, to whose homes she went every Christmas Eve. The toys and the bright tarleton bags of candy scattered about the room gave it an air that was almost festive; and for a few minutes he stayed with her, watching the glow of pleasure in her small, pale face, while he helped stuff the toes of the yarn stockings with oranges and nuts. As he stood there, surrounded by the little gifts, he felt, for the first time since his childhood, the full

significance of Christmas—of its cheer, its mirth and its solemnity.

"I am to have a tree at twelve o'clock to-morrow. Will you come?" she asked wistfully, and he promised, with a smile, before he left her and went out again into the storm.

In the street a crowd of boys were snowballing one another, and as he passed a ball struck him, knocking his hat into a drift. Turning in pretended fury, he plunged into the thick of the battle, and when he retreated some minutes afterward, he was powdered from head to foot with dry, feathery flakes. When he reached home, he discovered, with dismay, that he left patches of white on the carpet from the door to the upper landing. After he had entered his room he shook the snow from his clothes, and then looking at his watch, saw to his surprise, that luncheon must have been over for at least an hour. In a little while, he told himself, he would go downstairs and demand something to eat from the old butler; but the hearth was so bright and warm that after sinking into his accustomed chair, he found that it was almost impossible to make the effort to go out. In a moment a delicious drowsiness crept over him, and he fell presently asleep, while the cigar he had lighted burned slowly out in his hand.

The sound of the opening and closing door brought him suddenly awake with a throb of pain. The gray light from the windows, beyond which the snow fell heavily, was obscured by the figure of Lydia,

who seemed to spring upon him out of some dim mist of sleep. At first he saw only her pale face and white outstretched hands; then as she came rapidly forward and dropped on her knees in the firelight, he saw that her face was convulsed with weeping and her eyes red and swollen. For the first time in his life, it occurred to him with a curious quickness of perception, he looked upon the naked soul of the woman, with her last rag of conventionality stripped from her. In the shock of the surprise, he half rose to his feet, and then sank back helplessly, putting out his hand as if he would push her away from him.

"Lydia," he said, "don't keep me waiting. Tell me at once."

She tried to speak, and he heard her voice strangle like a live thing in her throat.

"Is Alice dead?" he asked quietly, "or is Dick?"

At this she appeared to regain control of herself and he watched the mask of her impenetrable reserve close over her features. "It is not that—nobody is dead—it is worse," she answered in a subdued and lifeless voice.

"Worse?" The word stunned him, and he stared at her blankly, like a person whose mind has suddenly given way.

"Alice is in my room," she went on, when he had paused, "I left her with Uncle Richard while I came here to look for you. We did not hear you come in. I thought you were still out."

Her manner, even more than her words, impressed him only as an evasion of the thing in her mind,

and seizing her hands almost roughly, he drew her forward until he could look closely into her face.

"For God's sake—speak!" he commanded.

But with his grasp all animation appeared to go out of her, and she fell across his knees in an immovable weight, while her eyes still gazed up at him.

"If you can't tell me I must go to Uncle Richard," he added.

As he attempted to rise she put out her hands to restrain him, and in the midst of his suspense, he was amazed at the strength there was in a creature so slight and fragile.

"Uncle Richard has just come to tell us," she said in a whisper. "A lawyer—a detective—somebody. I can't remember who it is—has come down from New York to see Geoffrey about a check signed in his name, which was returned to the bank there. At the first glance it was seen to be—to be not in his writing. When it was sent to him, after the bank had declined to honour it, he declared it to be a forgery and sent it back to them at once. It is now in their hands——"

"To whom was it drawn?" he asked so quietly that his voice sounded in his own ears like the voice of a stranger.

"To Damon & Hanska, furriers in Fifth Avenue, and it was sent in payment for a sable coat which Alice had bought. They had already begun a suit, it seems, to recover the money."

As she finished he rose slowly to his feet, and stood staring at the snow which fell heavily beyond

the window. The twisted bough of a poplar tree just outside was rocking back and forth with a creaking noise, and presently, as his ears grew accustomed to the silence in the room, he heard the loud monotonous ticking of the clock on the mantel, which seemed to grow more distinct with each minute that the hands travelled. Lydia had slipped from his grasp as he rose, and lay now with her face buried in the cushions of the chair. It was a terrible thing for Lydia, he thought suddenly, as he looked down on her.

"And Geoffrey Heath?" he asked, repeating the question in a raised voice when she did not answer.

"Oh, what can we expect of him? What can we expect?" she demanded, with a shudder. "Alice is sure that he hates her, that he would seize any excuse to divorce her, to outrage her publicly. He will do nothing—nothing—nothing," she said, rising to her feet, " he has returned the check to the bank, and denied openly all knowledge of it. After some violent words with Alice in the lawyer's presence, he declared to them both that he did not care in the least what steps were taken—that he had washed his hands of her and of the whole affair. She is half insane with terror of a prosecution, and can hardly speak coherently. Oh, I wonder why one ever has children?" she exclaimed in anguish.

With her last words it seemed to him that the barrier which had separated him from Lydia had crumbled suddenly to ruins between them. The space which love could not bridge was spanned by pity; and crossing to where she stood, he put his arms

about her, while she bowed her head on his breast and wept.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he said softly, and then putting her from him, he went out of the room and closed the door gently upon her grief.

From across the hall the sound of smothered sobs came to him, and entering Lydia's room, he saw Alice clinging hysterically to Richard's arm. As she looked round at his footsteps, her face showed so old and haggard between the splendid masses of her hair, that he could hardly believe for a minute that this half distraught creature was really his daughter. For an instant he was held dumb by the horror of it; then the silence was broken by the cry with which Alice threw herself into his arms. Once before she had rushed to his breast with the same word on her lips, he remembered.

"O papa, you will help me! You must help me!" she cried. "Oh, make them tell you all so that you may help me!"

"They have told me—your mother has told me, Alice," he answered, seeking in vain to release himself from the frantic grasp of her arms.

"Then you will make Geoffrey understand," she returned, almost angrily. "You will make Geoffrey understand that it was not my fault—that I could n't help it."

Richard Ordway turned from the window, through which he had been looking, and taking her fingers, which were closed in a vice-like pressure about Daniel's arm, pried them forcibly apart.

"Look at me, Alice," he said sternly, "and answer the question that I asked you. What did you say to Geoffrey when he spoke to you in the lawyer's presence? Did you deny, then, that you had signed the check? Don't struggle so, I must hear what you told them."

But she only writhed in his hold, straining her arms and her neck in the direction of Daniel.

"He was very cruel," she replied at last, "they were both very cruel. I don't know what I said, I was so frightened. Geoffrey hurt me terribly —he hurt me terribly," she whimpered like a child, and as she turned toward Daniel, he saw her bloodless gum, from which her lower lip had quivered and dropped.

"I must know what you told them, Alice," repeated the old man in an unmoved tone. "I can do nothing to help you, if you will not speak the truth." Even when her body struggled in his grasp, no muscle altered in the stern face he bent above her.

"Let me go," she pleaded passionately, "I want to go to papa! I want papa!"

At her cry Daniel made a single step forward, and then fell back because the situation seemed at the moment in the command of Richard. Again he felt the curious respect, the confidence, with which his uncle inspired him in critical moments.

"I shall let you go when you have told me the truth," said Richard calmly.

She grew instantly quiet, and for a minute she

appeared to hang a dead weight on his arm. Then her voice came with the whimpering, childlike sound.

"I told them that I had never touched it—that I had asked papa for the money, and he had given it to me," she said.

"I thought so," returned Richard grimly, and he released his hold so quickly that she fell in a limp heap at his feet.

"I wanted it from her own lips, though Mr. Cummins had already told me," he added, as he looked at his nephew.

For a moment Daniel stood there in silence, with his eyes on the gold-topped bottles on Lydia's dressing table. He had heard Alice's fall, but he did not stoop to lift her; he had heard Richard's words, but he did not reply to them. In one instant a violent revulsion—a furious anger against Alice swept over him, and the next he felt suddenly, as in his dream, the little hands pass over his brow and lips.

"She is right about it, Uncle Richard," he said, "I gave her the check."

At the words Richard turned quickly away, but with a shriek of joy, Alice raised herself to her knees, and looked up with shining eyes.

"I told you papa would know! I told you papa would help me!" she cried triumphantly to the old man.

Without looking at her, Richard turned his glance again to his nephew's face, and something that was almost a tremor seemed to pass through his voice.

"Daniel," he asked, "what is the use?"

"She has told you the truth," repeated Daniel steadily, "I gave her the check."

"You are ready to swear to this?"

"If it is necessary, I am."

Alice had dragged herself slowly forward, still on her knees, but as she came nearer him, Daniel retreated instinctively step by step until he had put the table between them.

"It is better for me to go away, I suppose, at once?" he inquired of Richard.

The gesture with which Richard responded was almost impatient. "If you are determined—it will be necessary for a time at least," he replied. "There 's no doubt, I hope, that the case will be hushed up, but already there has been something of a scandal. I have made good the loss to the bank, but Geoffrey has been very difficult to bring to reason. He wanted a divorce and he wanted revenge in a vulgar way upon Alice."

"But she is safe now?" asked Daniel, and the coldness in his tone came as a surprise to him when he spoke.

"Yes, she is safe," returned Richard, "and you, also, I trust. There is little danger, I think, under the circumstances, of a prosecution. If at any time," he added, with a shaking voice, "before your return you should wish the control of your property, I will turn it over to you at once."

"Thank you," said Daniel quietly, and then with an embarrassed movement, he held out his hand. "I shall go, I think, on the four o'clock train," he continued, "is that what you would advise?"

"It is better, I feel, to go immediately. I have an appointment with the lawyer for the bank at a quarter of five." He put out his hand again for his nephew's. "Daniel, you are a good man," he added, as he turned away.

Not until a moment later, when he was in the hall, did Ordway remember that he had left Alice crouched on the floor, and coming back he lifted her into his arms. "It is all right, Alice, don't cry," he said, as he kissed her. Then turning from her, with a strange dullness of sensation, he crossed the hall and entered his room, where he found Lydia still lying with her face hidden in the cushions of the chair.

At his step she looked up and put out her hand, with an imploring gesture.

"Daniel!" she called softly, "Daniel!"

Before replying to her he went to his bureau and hurriedly packed some clothes into a bag. Then, with the satchel still in his hand, he came over and stopped beside her.

"I can't wait to explain, Lydia; Uncle Richard will tell you," he said.

"You are going away? Do you mean you are going away?" she questioned.

"To-morrow you will understand," he answered, "that it is better so."

For a moment uncertainty clouded her face; then she raised herself and leaned toward him.

"But Alice? Does Alice go with you?" she asked.

"No, Alice is safe. Go to her."

"You will come back again? It is not forever?"

He shook his head smiling. "Perhaps," he answered.

She still gazed steadily up at him, and he saw presently a look come into her face like the look with which she had heard of the blow he had struck Geoffrey Heath.

"Daniel, you are a brave man," she said, and sobbed as she kissed him.

Following him to the threshold, she listened, with her face pressed against the lintel, while she heard him go down the staircase and close the front door softly behind him.

## CHAPTER VII

### Flight

Not until the train had started and the conductor had asked for his ticket, did Ordway realize that he was on his wap to Tappahannock. At the discovery he was conscious of no surprise—scarcely of any interest—it seemed to matter to him so little in which direction he went. A curious numbness of sensation had paralysed both his memory and his perceptions, and he hardly knew whether he was glad or sorry, warm or cold. In the same way he wondered why he felt no regret at leaving Botetourt forever—no clinging tenderness for his home, for Lydia, for Alice. If his children had been strangers to him he could not have thought of his parting from them with a greater absence of feeling. Was it possible at last that he was to be delivered from the emotional intensity, the power of vicarious suffering, which had made him one of the world's failures? He recalled indifferently Alice's convulsed features, and the pathetic quiver of her lip, which had drooped like a child's that is hurt. These things left him utterly unmoved when he remembered them, and he even found himself asking the next instant, with a vague curiosity, if the bald-headed man in the seat in front of him was going home to spend Christmas with

his daughter? "But what has this bald-headed man to do with Alice or with me?" he demanded in perplexity, "and why is it that I can think of him now with the same interest with which I think of my own child? I am going away forever and I shall never see them again," he continued, with emphasis, as if to convince himself of some fact which he had but half understood. "Yes, I shall never see them again, and Alice will be quite happy without me, and Alice's child will grow up probably without hearing my name. Yet I did it for Alice. No, I did not do it for Alice, or for Alice's child," he corrected quickly, with a piercing flash of insight. "It was for something larger, stronger —something as inevitable as the law. I could not help it, it was for myself," he added, after a minute. And it seemed to him that with this inward revelation the outer covering of things was stripped suddenly from before his eyes. As beneath his sacrifice he recognised the inexorable law, so beneath Alice's beauty he beheld the skeleton which her radiant flesh clothed with life, and beneath Lydia's mask of conventionality her little naked soul, too delicate and shivering to stand alone. It was as if all pretence, all deceit, all illusions, had shrivelled now in the hard dry, atmosphere through which he looked. "Yes, I am indifferent to them all and to everything," he concluded; "Lydia, and Dick and even Alice are no closer to me than is the bald-headed man on the front seat. Nobody is closer to another when it comes to that, for each one of us is alone in an illimitable space."

The swinging lights of the train were reflected in the falling snow outside, like orbed blue flames against a curtain of white. Through the crack under the window a little cold draught entered, blowing the cinders from the sill into his face. It was the common day coach of a local train, and the passengers were, for the most part, young men or young women clerks, who were hastening back to their country homes for Christmas. Once when they reached a station several girls got off, with their arms filled with packages, and pushed their way through the heavy drifts to a sleigh waiting under the dim oil lamp outside. For a minute he followed them idly in his imagination, seeing the merry party ploughing over the old country roads to the warm farm house, where a bright log fire and a Christmas tree were prepared for them. The window panes were frosted over now, and when the train started on its slow journey he could see only the orbed blue flames dancing in the night against the whirling snowflakes.

It was nine o'clock when they pulled into Tappahannock and when he came out upon the platform he found that the storm had ceased, though the ground lay white and hard beneath the scattered street lamps. Straight ahead of him, as he walked up the long hill from the station, he heard the ring of other footsteps on the frozen snow. The lights were still burning in the little shops, and through the uncurtained windows he could see the variegated display of Christmas decorations. Here and there a woman, with her head wrapped in a shawl, was

peering eagerly at a collection of toys or a wreath of evergreens, but, for the rest, the shops appeared singularly empty even for so late an hour on Christmas Eve. In the absorption of his thoughts, he scarcely noticed this, and he was conscious of no particular surprise when, as he reached the familiar warehouse, he saw Baxter's enormous figure loom darkly under the flickering light above the sidewalk. Behind him the vacant building yawned like a sepulchral cavern, the dim archway hung with a glistening fringe of icicles.

"Is that you, Baxter?" he asked, and stretched out his hand with a mechanical movement.

"Why, bless my soul, Smith!" exclaimed Baxter, "who 'd ever have believed it!"

"I 've just got off the train," returned Ordway, feeling vaguely that some explanation of his presence was needed, "and I 'm trying to find a place where I can keep warm until I take the one for the West at midnight. It did n't occur to me that you would be in your office. I was going to Mrs. Buzzy's."

"You 'd better come along with me, for I don't believe you 'll find a living soul at Mag Buzzy's—not even a kid," replied Baxter, "her husband is one of Jasper Trend's overseers, you know, and they 're most likely down at the cotton mills."

"At the cotton mills? Why, what 's the matter there?"

"You have n't heard then? I thought it was in all the papers. There 's been a big strike on for a week —Jasper lowered wages the first of the month—and

every operative has turned out and demanded more pay and shorter hours. The old man 's hoppin', of course, and the funny part is, Smith, that he lays every bit of the trouble at your door. He says that you started it all by raisin' the ideas of the operatives."

"But it 's a pretty serious business for them, Baxter. How are they going to live through this weather?"

"They ain't livin', they 're starvin', though I believe the union is comin' to their help sooner or later. But what 's that in such a blood-curdlin' spell as this?"

A sudden noise, like that of a great shout, rising and falling in the bitter air, came to them from below the slope of the hill, and catching Ordway's arm, Baxter drew him closer under the street lamp.

"They 're hootin' at the guards Trend has put around the mills," he said, while his words floated like vapour out of his mouth into the cold, "he 's got policemen stalkin' up an' down before his house, too."

"You mean he actually fears violence?"

"Oh, well, when trouble is once started, you know, it is apt to go at a gallop. A policeman got his skull knocked in yesterday, and one of the strikers had his leg broken this afternoon. Somebody has been stonin' Jasper's windows in the back, but they can't tell whether it 's a striker or a scamp of a boy. The truth is, Smith," he added, "that Jasper ought to have sold the mills when he had an offer of a hundred thousand six months ago. But he would n't

do it because he said he made more than the interest on that five times over. I reckon he 's sorry enough now he did n't catch at it."

For a moment Ordway looked in silence under the hanging icicles into the cavernous mouth of the warehouse, while he listened to the smothered sounds, like the angry growls of a great beast, which came toward them from the foot of the hill.

Into the confusion of his thoughts there broke suddenly the meaning of Richard Ordway's parting words.

"Baxter," he said quietly, "I 'll give Jasper Trend a hundred thousand dollars for his mills tonight."

Baxter let go the lamp post against which he was leaning, and fell back a step, rubbing his stiffened hands on his big shaggy overcoat.

"You, Smith? Why, what in thunder do you want with 'em? It 's my belief that they will be afire before midnight. Do you hear that noise? Well, there ain't men enough in Tappahannock to put those mills out when they are once caught."

Ordway turned his face from the warehouse to his companion, and it seemed to Baxter that his eyes shone like blue lights out of the darkness.

"But they won't burn after they 're mine, Baxter," he answered. "I 'll buy the mills and I 'll settle this strike before I leave Tappahannock at midnight."

"You mean you 'll go away even after you 've bought 'em?"

"I mean I 've got to go—to go always from place to place—but I 'll leave you here in my stead." He laughed shortly, but there was no merriment in the sound. "I 'll run the mills on the coöperative plan, Baxter, and I 'll leave you in charge of them—you and Banks." Then he caught Baxter's arm with both hands, and turned his body forcibly in the direction of the church at the top of the hill. "While we are talking those people down there are freezing," he said.

"An' so am I, if you don't mind my mentionin' it," observed Baxter meekly.

"Then let 's go to Trend's. There 's not a minute to lose, if we are to save the mills. Are you coming, Baxter?"

"Oh, I 'm comin'," replied Baxter, waddling in his shaggy coat like a great black bear, "but I 'd like to git up my wind first," he added, puffing clouds of steam as he ascended the hill.

"There 's no time for that," returned Ordway, sharply, as he dragged him along.

When they reached Jasper Trend's gate, a policeman, who strolled, beating his hands together, on the board walk, came up and stopped them as they were about to enter. Then recognising Baxter, he apologised and moved on. A moment later the sound of their footsteps on the porch brought the head of Banks to the crack of the door.

"Who are you? and what is your business?" he demanded.

"Banks!" said Ordway in a whisper, and at his

voice the bar, which Banks had slipped from the door, fell with a loud crash from his hands.

"Good Lord, it 's really you, Smith!" he cried in a delirium of joy.

"Harry, be careful or you 'll wake the baby," called a voice softly from the top of the staircase.

"Darn the baby!" growled Banks, lowering his tone obediently. "The next thing she 'll be asking me to put out the mills because the light wakes the baby. When did you come, Smith? And what on God's earth are you doing here?"

"I came to stop the strike," responded Ordway, smiling. "I 've brought an offer to Mr. Trend, I must speak to him at once."

"He 's in the dining-room, but if you 've come from the strikers it 's no use. His back 's up."

"Well, it ain't from the strikers," interrupted Baxter, pushing his way in the direction of the dining-room. "It 's from a chap we won't name, but he wants to buy the mills, not to settle the strike with Jasper."

"Then he 's a darn fool," remarked Jasper Trend from the threshold, "for if I don't get the ringleaders arrested befo' mornin' thar won't be a brick left standin' in the buildings."

"The chap I mean ain't worryin' about that," said Baxter, "provided you 'll sign the agreement in the next ten minutes. He 's ready to give you a hundred thousand for the mills, strikers an' all."

"Sign the agreement? I ain't got any agreement," protested Jasper, suspecting a trap, "and how do I

know that the strike ain't over befo' you 're making the offer?"

"Well, if you 'll just step over to the window, and stick your head out, you won't have much uncertainty about that, I reckon," returned Baxter.

Crossing to the window, Ordway threw it open, waiting with his hand on the sash, while the threatening shouts from below the hill floated into the room.

"Papa, the baby can't sleep for the noise those men make down at the mills," called a peremptory voice from the landing above.

"I told you so!" groaned Banks, closing the window.

"I ain't got any agreement," repeated Jasper, in helpless irritation, as he sank back into his chair.

"Oh, I reckon Smith can draw up one for you as well as a lawyer," said Baxter, while Ordway, sitting down at a little fancy desk of Milly's in one corner, wrote out the agreement of sale on a sheet of scented note paper.

When he held the pen out to Jasper, the old man looked up at him with blinking eyes. "Is it to hold good if the damned thing burns befo' mornin'?" he asked.

"If it burns before morning—yes."

With a sigh of relief Jasper wrote his name. "How do I know if I 'm to get the money?" he inquired the next instant, moved by a new suspicion.

"I shall telegraph instructions to a lawyer in Botetourt," replied Ordway, as he handed the pen

to Baxter, "and you will receive an answer by twelve o'clock to-morrow. I want your signature, also, Banks," he continued, turning to the young man. "I 've made two copies, you see, one of which I shall leave with Baxter."

"Then you 're going away?" inquired Banks, gloomily.

Ordway nodded. "I am leaving on the midnight train," he answered.

"So you 're going West?"

"Yes, I 'm going West, and I've barely time to settle things at the mills before I start. God bless you, Banks. Good-bye."

Without waiting for Baxter, who was struggling into his overcoat in the hall, he broke away from the detaining hold of Banks, and opening the door, ran down the frozen walk, and out into the street, where the policeman called a "Merry Christmas!" to him as he hurried by.

When he gained the top of the hill, and descended rapidly toward the broad level beyond, where the brick buildings of the cotton mills stood in the centre of a waste of snow, the shouts grew louder and more frequent, and the black mass on the frozen ground divided itself presently into individual atoms. A few bonfires had started on the outskirts of the crowd, and by their fitful light, which fell in jagged, reddish shadows on the snow, he could see the hard faces of the men, the sharpened ones of the women, and the pinched ones of little children, all sallow from close work in unhealthy atmospheres and wan

from lack of nourishing and wholesome food. As he approached one of these fires, made from a burning barrel, a young woman, with a thin, blue face, and a baby wrapped in a ragged shawl on her breast, turned and spat fiercely in his direction. "This ain't no place for swells!" she screamed, and began laughing shrilly in a half-crazed voice.

In the excitement no one noticed her, and her demented shrieks followed him while he made his way cautiously along the outskirts of the strikers, until he came to the main building, before which a few men with muskets had cleared a hollow space. They looked cowed and sullen, he saw, for their sympathies were evidently with the operatives, and he realised that the first organised attack would force them from their dangerous position.

Approaching one of the guards, whom he remembered, Ordway touched him upon the arm and asked to be permitted to mount to the topmost step. "I have a message to deliver to the men," he said.

The guard looked up with a start of fear, and then, recognising him, exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, "My God, boys, it 's 'Ten Commandment Smith' or it 's his ghost!"

"Let me get through to the steps," said Ordway, "I must speak to them."

"Well, you may speak all you want to, but I doubt if they 'd listen to an angel from heaven if he were to talk to them about Jasper Trend. They are preparing a rush on the doors now, and when they make it they 'll go through."

Passing him in silence, Ordway mounted the steps, and stood with his back against the doors of the main building, in which, when he had last entered it, the great looms had been at work. Before him the dark mass heaved back and forth, and farther away, amid the bonfires in the waste of frozen snow, he could hear the shrill, mocking laughter of the half-crazed woman.

"We won't hear any talk," cried a spokesman in the front ranks of the crowd. "It 's too late to haggle now. We 'll have nothin' from Jasper Trend unless he gives us what we ask."

"And if he says he 'll give it who will believe him?" jeered a woman, farther back, holding a crying child above her head. "He killed the father and he 's starvin' the children."

"No—no, we 'll have no damned words. We 'll burn out the scabs!" shouted a man, lifting a torch he had just lit at a bonfire. As the torch rose in a splendid blaze, it lighted up the front of the building, and cast a yellow flame upon Ordway's face.

"I have nothing to do with Jasper Trend!" he called out, straightening himself to his full height. "He has no part in the mills from to-night! I have bought them from him!"

With the light on his face, he stood there an instant before them, while the shouts changed in the first shock of recognition from anger to surprise. The minute afterward the crowd was rocked by a single gigantic emotion, and it hurled itself forward, bearing down the guards in its efforts to reach the steps.

As it swayed back and forth its individual members —men, women and children—appeared to float like straws on some cosmic undercurrent of feeling.

"From to-night the mills belong to me!" he cried in a voice which rang over the frozen ground to where the insane woman was laughing beside a bonfire. "Your grievances after to-night are not against Jasper Trend, but against me. You shall have fair pay, fair hours and clean rooms, I promise you——"

He went on still, but his words were drowned in the oncoming rush of the crowd, which rolled forward like great waters, surrounding him, overwhelming him, sweeping him off his feet, and bearing him out again upon its bosom. The cries so lately growls of anger had changed suddenly, and above all the din and rush he heard rising always the name which he had made honoured and beloved in Tappahannock. It was the one great moment of his life, he knew, when on the tremendous swell of feeling, he was borne like a straw up the hillside and back into the main street of Tappahannock.

An hour later, bruised, aching and half stunned, he entered the station and telegraphed twice to Richard Ordway before he went out upon the platform to take the train. He had left his instructions with Baxter, from whom he had just parted, and now, as he walked up and down in the icy darkness, broken by the shivering lights of the station, it seemed

to him that he was like a man, who having been condemned to death, stands looking back a little wistfully at life from the edge of the grave. He had had his great moment, and ahead of him there was nothing.

A freight train passed with a grating noise, a station hand, holding a lantern ran hurriedly along the track, a whistle blew, and then again there was stillness. His eyes were wearily following the track, when he felt a touch on his arm, and turning quickly, saw Banks, in a fur-lined overcoat, looking up at him with an embarrassed air.

"Smith," he said, strangling a cough, "I 've seen Baxter, and neither he nor I like your going West this way all by yourself and half sick. If you don't mind, I 've arranged to take a little holiday and come along. To tell the truth, it's just exactly the chance I 've been looking for. I have n't been away from Milly twenty-four hours since I married her, and a change does anybody good."

"No, you can't come, Banks, I don't want you. I'd rather be alone," replied Ordway, almost indignantly.

"But you ain't well," insisted Banks stubbornly. "We don't like the looks of you, Baxter and I."

"Well, you can't come, that's all," retorted Ordway, as the red eyes of the engine pierced the darkness. "There, go home, Banks," he added, as he held out his hand, "I'm much obliged to you. You're a first-rate chap. Good-bye."

"Then good-bye," returned Banks hastily turning away.

A minute afterward, as Ordway swung himself on the train, he heard the bells of a church, ringing cheerfully in the frosty air, and remembered, with a start, that it was Christmas morning.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The End of the Road

In the morning, after a short sleep on the hard plush seat, he awoke with a shooting pain in his head. When the drowsiness of exhaustion had overcome him, he remembered, he had been idly counting the dazzling electric lights of a town through which they were passing. By the time he had reached "twenty-one" he had dropped off into unconsciousness, though it seemed to him that a second self within him, wholly awake, had gone on through the night counting without pause, "twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five—" Still in his brain the numbers went on, and still the great globular lights flashed past his eyes.

Struggling awake in the gray dawn, he lay without changing his position, until the mist gave place slowly to the broad daylight. Then he found that they were approaching another town, which appeared from a distant view to resemble a single gigantic factory, composed chiefly of a wilderness of chimneys. When he looked at his watch, he saw that it was eight o'clock; and the conductor passing through the coach at the instant, informed the passengers generally that they must change cars for the West. The name of the town Ordway failed

to catch, but it made so little difference to him that he followed the crowd mechanically, without inquiring where it would lead him. The pain in his head had extended now to his chest and shoulders, and presently it passed into his lower limbs, with a racking ache that seemed to take from him the control of his muscles. Yet all the while he felt a curious drowsiness, which did not in the least resemble sleep, creeping over him like the stealthy effect of some powerful drug. After he had breathed the fresh air outside, he felt it to be impossible that he should return to the overheated car, and pushing his way through the crowded station, where men were rushing to the luncheon counter in one corner, he started along a broad street, which looked as if it led to an open square at the top of a long incline. On either side there were rows of narrow tenements, occupied evidently by the operatives in the imposing factories he had observed from the train. Here and there a holly wreath suspended from a cheap lace curtain, reminded him again that it was Christmas morning, and by some eccentricity of memory, he recalled vividly a Christmas before his mother's death, when he had crept on his bare feet, in the dawn, to peep into the bulging stocking before her fireplace.

At the next corner a small eating house had hung out its list of Christmas dainties, and going inside he sat down at one of the small deserted tables and asked for a cup of coffee. When it was brought he swallowed it in the hope that it might drive away the heaviness in his head, but after a moment of

relief the stupor attacked him again more oppressively than ever. He felt that even the growing agony in his forehead and shoulders could not keep him awake if he could only find a spot in which to lie down and rest.

After he came out into the street again he felt stronger and better, and it occurred to him that his headache was due probably to the fact that he had eaten nothing since breakfast the day before. He remembered now that he had missed his luncheon because of his long walk into the country, and the recollection of this trivial incident seemed to make plain all the subsequent events. Everything that had been so confused a moment ago stood out quite clearly now. His emotions, which had been benumbed when he left Botetourt, revived immediately in the awakening of his memory; and he was seized with a terrible longing to hold Alice in his arms and to say to her that he forgave her and loved her still. It seemed to him impossible that he should have come away after a single indifferent kiss, without glancing back—and her face rose before him, not convulsed and haggard as he had last seen it, but glowing and transfigured, with her sparkling blue eyes and her lips that were too red and too full for beauty. Then, even while he looked at her with love, the old numbness crept back, and his feeling for her died utterly away. "No, I have ceased to care," he thought indifferently. "It does not matter to me whether I see her again or not. I must eat and lie down, nothing else is of consequence."

He had reached the open space at the end of the long graded hill, and as he stopped to look about him he saw that a small hotel, frequented probably by travelling salesmen, stood directly across the square, which was now deep in snow. Following the pavement to the open door of the lobby, he went inside and asked for a room, after which he passed into the restaurant and drank a second cup of coffee. Then turning away from his untasted food, he went upstairs to the large, bare apartment, with a broken window pane, which they had assigned him, and throwing himself upon the unmade bed, fell heavily asleep.

When he awoke the pain was easier, and feeling oppressed by the chill vacancy of the room, he went downstairs and out into the open square. Though it was a dull gray afternoon, the square was filled with children, dragging bright new sleds over the snow. One of them, a little brown-haired girl, was trundling her Christmas doll and as she passed him, she turned and smiled into his face with a joyful look. Something in her smile was vaguely familiar to him, and he remembered, after a minute, that Emily had looked at him like that on the morning when he had met her for the first time riding her old white horse up the hill in Tappahannock. "Yes, it was that look that made me love her," he thought dispassionately, as if he were reviewing some dimly remembered event in a former life, "and it is because I loved her that I was able to do these things. If I had not loved her, I should not have saved Milly Trend, nor gone back to Botetourt, nor sacrificed

myself for Alice. Yes, all these have come from that," he added, "and will go back, I suppose, to that in the end." The little girl ran by again, still trundling her doll, and again he saw Emily in her red cape on the old horse.

For several hours he sat there in the frozen square, hardly feeling the cold wind that blew over him. But when he rose presently to go into the hotel, he found that his limbs were stiff, and the burning pain had returned with violence to his head and chest. The snow in the square seemed to roll toward him as he walked, and it was with difficulty that he dragged himself step by step along the pavement to the entrance of the hotel. After he was in his room again he threw himself, still dressed, upon the bed, and fell back into the stupor out of which he had come.

When he opened his eyes after an hour, he was hardly sure, for the first few minutes, whether he was awake or asleep. The large, bare room in which he had lost consciousness had given place, when he awoke, to his prison cell. The hard daylight came to him through the grated windows, and from a nail in the wall he saw his gray prison coat, with the red bars, won for good behaviour, upon the sleeve. Then while he looked at it, the red bars changed quickly to the double stripes of a second term, and the double stripes became three, and the three became four, until it seemed to him that he was striped from head to foot so closely that he knew that he must have gone on serving term after term since the be-

ginning of the world. "No, no, that is not mine. I am wearing the red bars!" he cried out, and came back to himself with a convulsive shudder.

As he looked about him the hallucination vanished, and he felt that he had come out of an eternity of unconsciousness into which he should presently sink back again. The day before appeared to belong to some other life that he had lived while he was still young, yet when he opened his eyes the same gray light filled the windows, the same draught blew through the broken pane, the same vague shadows crawled back and forth on the ceiling. The headache was gone now, but the room had grown very cold, and from time to time, when he coughed, long shivers ran through his limbs and his teeth chattered. He had thrown his overcoat across his chest as a coverlet, but the cold from which he suffered was an inward chill, which was scarcely increased by the wind that blew through the broken pane. There was no confusion in his mind now, but a wonderful lucidity, in which he saw clearly all that had happened to him last night in Tappahannock. "Yes, that was my good moment," he said "and after such a moment there is nothing, but death. If I can only die everything will be made entirely right and simple." As he uttered the words the weakness of self pity swept over him, and with a sudden sense of spiritual detachment, he was aware of a feeling of sympathy for that other "I," who seemed so closely related to him, and yet outside of himself. The real "I" was somewhere above amid the

crawling shadows on the ceiling, but the other—the false one—lay on the bed under the overcoat; and he saw, when he looked down that, though he himself was young, the other "I" was old and haggard and unshaven. "So there are two of us, after all," he thought, "poor fellows, poor fellows."

But the minute afterward the perception of his dual nature faded as rapidly as the hallucination of his prison cell. In its place there appeared the little girl, who had passed him, trundling her Christmas doll, in the square below. "I have seen her before—she is vaguely familiar," he thought, troubled because he could not recall the resemblance. From this he passed to the memory of Alice when she was still a child, and she came back to him, fresh and vivid, as on the day when she had run out to beg him to come in to listen to her music. The broken scales ran in his head again, but there was no love in his heart.

His gaze dropped from the ceiling and turned toward the door, for in the midst of his visions, he had seen it open softly and Banks come into the room on tiptoe and stop at the foot of the bed, regarding him with his embarrassed and silly look "What in the devil, am I dreaming about Banks for?" he demanded aloud, with an impatient movement of his feet, as if he meant to kick the obtruding dream away from his bed.

At the kick the dream stopped rolling its prominent pale eyes and spoke. "I hope you ain't sick, Smith," it said, and with the first words he knew

that it was Banks in the familiar flesh and not the disembodied spirit.

"No I 'm not sick, but what are you doing here?" he asked.

"Enjoying myself " replied Banks gloomily.

"Well, I wish you 'd chosen to enjoy yourself somewhere else."

"I could n't. If you don't mind I 'd like to stuff the curtain into that window pane."

"Oh, I don't mind. When did you get here?"

"I came on the train with you."

"On the train with me? Where did you get on? I did n't see you."

"You did n't look," replied Banks, from the window, where he was stuffing the red velveteen curtain into the broken pane. "I was in the last seat in the rear coach."

"So you followed me," said Ordway indignantly. "I told you not to. Why did you do it?"

Banks came back and stood again at the foot of the bed, looking at him with his sincere and kindly smile.

"Well, the truth is, I wanted an outing," he answered, "it 's a good baby as babies go, but I get dog-tired of playing nurse."

"You might have gone somewhere else. There are plenty of places."

"I could n't think of 'em, and, besides, this seems a nice town. The're a spanking fine lot of factories. But I hope you ain't sick Smith? What are you doing in bed?"

"Oh, I 've given up," replied Ordway gruffly. "Every man has a right to give up some time, has n't he?"

"I don't know about every man," returned Banks, stolidly, "but you have n't, Smith."

"Well, I 've done it anyway," retorted Ordway, and turned his face to the wall.

As he lay there with closed eyes, he had an obscure impression that Banks—Banks, the simple; Banks, the impossible—was in some way operating the forces of destiny. First he heard the bell ring, then the door open and close, and a little later, the bleak room was suffused with a warm rosy light in which the vague shadows melted into a shimmering background. The crackling of the fire annoyed him because it suggested the possibility of physical comfort, and he no longer wanted to be comfortable.

"Smith," said Banks, coming over to the bed and pulling off the overcoat, "I 've got a good fire here and a chair. I wish you 'd get up. Good Lord, your hands are as hot as a hornet's nest. When did you eat anything?"

"I had breakfast in Botetourt," replied Ordway, as he rose from the bed and came over to the chair Banks had prepared. "I can't remember when it was, but it must have been since the creation of the world, I suppose." The fire grew suddenly black before him, "I 'd rather lie down," he added, "my head is splitting and I can't see."

"Oh, you 'll see all right in a minute. Wait till I light this candle, so the electric light won't hurt

your eyes. The boy 's gone for a little supper, and as soon as you 've swallowed a mouthful you 'll begin to feel better."

"But I 'm not hungry. I won't eat," returned Ordway, with an irritable feeling that Banks was looming into a responsibility. Anything that pulled one back to life was what he wanted to escape, and even the affection of Banks might prove, he thought, tenaciously clinging. One resolution he had made in the beginning—he would not take up his life again for the sake of Banks.

"Yes, you must, Smith," remonstrated the other, with an angelic patience which gave him, if possible, a more foolish aspect. "It 's after six o'clock and you have n't had a bite since yesterday at eight. That 's why your head 's so light and you 're in a raging fever."

"It is n't that, Banks, it 's because I 've got to die," he answered. "If they don't hush things up with money, I may have to go back to prison." As he said the words he saw again the prison coat, with the double stripes of a second term, as in the instant of his hallucination.

"I know," said Banks, softly, as he bent over to poke the fire. "There was a line or two about it in a New York paper. But they 'll hush it up, and besides they said it was just suspicion."

"You knew all the time and yet you wanted me to go back to Tappahannock?"

"Oh, they don't read the papers much there, except the *Tappahannock Herald*, and it won't get into

that. It was just a silly little slip anyway, and not two dozen people will be likely to know what it meant."

"And you, Banks? What do you think?" he asked with a mild curiosity.

Banks shook his head. "Why, what 's the use in your asking?" he replied. "Of course, I know that you did n't do it, and if you had done it, it would have been just because the other man ought to have written his name and would n't," he concluded, unblushingly.

For a moment Ordway looked at him in silence. "You 're a good chap, Banks," he said at last in a dull voice. Again he felt, with an awakened irritation, that the absurd Banks was pulling him back to life. Was it impossible, after all, that a man should give up, as long as there remained a soul alive who believed in him? It was n't only the love of women, then, that renewed courage. He had loved both Emily and Alice, and yet they were of less importance in his life at this hour than was Banks, whom he had merely endured. Yet he had thought the love of Emily a great thing and that of Banks a small one.

His gaze went back to the flames, and he did not remove it when a knock came at the door, and supper was brought in and placed on a little table before the fire.

"I ordered a bowl of soup for you, Smith," said Banks, crumbling the bread into it as he spoke, as if he were preparing a meal for a baby, "and a good

stout piece of beefsteak for myself. Now drink this whiskey, won't you."

"I 'm not hungry," returned Ordway, pushing the glass away, after it had touched his lips. "I won't eat."

Banks placed the bowl of soup on the fender, and then sat down with his eyes fastened on the tray. "I have n't had a bite myself since breakfast," he remarked, "and I 'm pretty faintish, but I tell you, Smith, if it 's the last word I speak, that I won't put my knife into that beefsteak until you 've eaten your soup—no, not if I die right here of starvation."

"Well, I 'm sorry you 're such a fool, for I 've no intention of eating it. I left you my whiskey, you can take that."

"I should n't dare to on an empty stomach. I get drunk too quick."

For a few minutes he sat in silence regarding the supper with a hungry look; then selecting a thin slice of bread, he stuck it on the end of a fork, and kneeling upon the hearthrug, held it out to the glowing coals. As it turned gradually to a delicious crisp brown, the appetising smell of it floated to Ordway's nostrils.

"I always had a particular taste for toast," remarked Banks as he buttered the slice and laid it on a hot plate on the fender. When he took up a second one, Ordway watched him with an attention of which he was almost unconscious, and he did not remove his gaze from the fire, until the last slice, brown and freshly buttered, was laid carefully upon the others. As he finished Banks threw down his fork, and

rising to his feet, looked wistfully at the beefsteak, keeping hot before the cheerful flames.

"It 's kind of rare, just as I like it," he observed, "thick and juicy, with little brown streaks from the broiler, and a few mushrooms scattered gracefully on top. Tappahannock is a mighty poor place for a steak," he concluded resignedly, " it ain't often I have a chance at one, but I thought to-night being Christmas——"

"Then, for God's sake, eat it!" thundered Ordway, while he made a dash for his soup.

But an hour after he had taken it, his fever rose so high that Banks helped him into bed and rushed out in alarm for the doctor.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Light Beyond

Out of the obscurity of the next few weeks, he brought, with the memory of Banks hovering about his bed, the vague impression of a woman's step across his floor and a woman's touch on his brow and hands. When he returned to consciousness the woman's step and touch had vanished, but Banks was still nursing him with his infinite patience and his silly, good-humoured smile. The rest was a dream, he said to himself, resignedly, as he turned his face to the wall and slept.

On a mild January morning, when he came downstairs for the first time, and went with Banks out into the open square in front of the hotel, he put almost timidly the question which had been throbbing in his brain for weeks.

"Was there anybody else with me, Banks? I thought—I dreamed—I could n't get rid of it——"

"Who else could there have been?" asked Banks, and he stared straight before him, at the slender spire of the big, gray church in the next block. So the mystery would remain unsolved, Ordway understood, and he would go back to life cherishing either a divine memory or a phantasy of delirium.

After a little while Banks went off to the chemists'

with a prescription, and Ordway sat alone on a bench in the warm sunshine, which was rapidly melting the snow. It was Sunday morning, and presently the congregation streamed slowly past him on its way to the big gray church just beyond. A bright blue sky was overhead, the sound of bells was in the air, and under the melting snow he saw that the grass was still fresh and green. As he sat there in the wonderful Sabbath stillness, he felt, with a new sense of security, of reconciliation, that his life had again been taken out of his hands and adjusted without his knowledge. This time it had been Banks—Banks, the impossible—who had swayed his destiny, and lacking all other attributes, Banks had accomplished it through the simple power of the human touch. In the hour of his need it had been neither religion nor philosophy, but the outstretched hand, that had helped. Then his vision broadened and he saw that though the body of love is one, the members of it are infinite; and it was made plain to him at last, that the love of Emily, the love of Alice, and the love of Banks, were but different revelations of the same immortality. He had gone down into the deep places, and out of them he had brought this light, this message. As the people streamed past him to the big gray church, he felt that if they would only stop and listen, he could tell them in the open, not in walls, of the thing that they were seeking. Yet the time had not come, though in the hope of it he could sit there patiently under the blue sky, with the snow melting over the grass at his feet.

At the end of an hour Banks returned, and stood over him with affectionate anxiety. "In a few days you 'll be well enough to travel, Smith, and I 'll take you back with me to Tappahannock."

Ordway glanced up, smiling, and Banks saw in his face, so thin that the flesh seemed almost transparent, the rapt and luminous look with which he had stood over his Bible in the green field or in the little grove of pines.

"You will go back to Tappahannock and Baxter will take you in until you grow strong and well, and then you can start your schools, or your library, and look after the mills instead of letting Baxter do it."

"Yes," said Ordway, "yes," but he had hardly heard Banks's words, for his gaze was on the blue sky, against which the spire of the church rose like a pointing finger. His face shone as if from an inward flame, and this flame, burning clearly in his blue eyes, transfigured his look. Ah, Smith was always a dreamer, thought Banks, with the uncomprehending simplicity of a child.

But Ordway was looking beyond Banks, beyond the church spire, beyond the blue sky. He saw himself, not as Banks pictured him, living quietly in Tappahannock, but still struggling, still fighting, still falling to rise and go on again. His message was not for Tappahannock alone, but for all places where there were men and women working and suffering and going into prison and coming out. He heard his voice speaking to them in the square of this town; then in many squares and in many towns——

"Come," said Banks softly, "the wind is changing. It is time to go in."

With an effort Ordway withdrew his gaze from the church spire. Then leaning upon Banks's arm, he slowly crossed the square to the door of the hotel. But before going inside, he turned and stood for a moment looking back at the grass which showed fresh and green under the melting snow.